Jawaharlal Nehru

GLIMPSES OF WORLD HISTORY

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GLIMPSES OF WORLD HISTORY

BEING FURTHER LETTERS TO HIS DAUGHTER, WRITTEN IN PRISON, AND CONTAINING A RAMBLING ACCOUNT OF HISTORY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

By

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

VOLUME
ONE

ALLAHABAD
KITABISTAN
17-A CITY ROAD

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Recent Essays and Writings

Letters from a Father to His Daughter

Whither India?

A Window in Prison and Prison-land

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FOREWORD

After five and a half months out of prison my brother, Jawaharlal Nehru, was arrested on the February 12, 1934, for 'sedition' and was subsequently sentenced to two years' imprisonment. At the time of his arrest he asked me to take charge of these 'Letters' and to supervise their publication.

Since these letters were written the world has moved rapidly and already many important changes have taken place. Some alterations and additions seem to be indicated but in the absence of the author it was not considered desirable to make them. A few minor alterations and omissions have, however, been made.

Owing to the absence of the author in prison and the difficulty of communicating with him, delay has occurred in the publication of these 'Letters' and the responsibility for some decisions has fallen on me. My burden has been lightened, however, by the publishers to whom I am grateful.

The book is being published in two volumes. The volumes are of unequal size, the second volume being a bigger one than the first. The first volume ends with the Napoleonic wars; the second volume thus contains a survey of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which have been dealt with by the author in greater detail. The dividing line between the two volumes seemed a natural one from the historical point of view, although unfortunately it involved volumes of unequal size.

ALLAHABAD
May, 1934

VIJAYA LAKSHMI PANDIT

PREFACE

I do not know when or where these Letters will be published, or whether they will be published at all, for India is a strange land to-day and it is difficult to prophesy. But I am writing these lines while I have the chance to do so, before events forestall me.

An apology and an explanation is needed for this historical series of letters. Those readers who take the trouble to go through them will perhaps find the apology and the explanation. In particular, I would refer the reader to the last Letter,* and perhaps it would be as well, in this topsy-turvy world, to begin at the end.

The letters have grown. There was little of planning about them, and I never thought that they would grow to these dimensions. Nearly six years ago, when my daughter was ten years old, I wrote to her a number of letters containing a brief and simple account of the early days of the world. These early letters were subsequently published in book form and they had a generous reception. The idea of continuing them hovered in my mind, but a busy life full of political activity prevented it from taking shape. Prison gave me a chance and I seized it.

Prison-life has its advantages; it brings some leisure and a measure of detachment. But the disadvantages are obvious. There are no libraries or reference books at the command of the prisoner, and, under these conditions, to write on any subject, and especially history, is a foolhardy undertaking. A number of books came to me but they could not be kept. They came and went. Twelve years ago, however, when, in common with large numbers of my countrymen and countrywomen, I started my pilgrimages to prison, I developed the habit of making notes of the books I read. My note-books grew in number and they came to my rescue when I started writing. Other books of course helped me

*This appears at the end of the second volume.

greatly, among them inevitably, H. G. Wells's 'Outline of History'. But the lack of good reference books was very real, and because of this the narrative had often to be slurred over, or particular periods skipped.

The letters are personal and there are many intimate touches in them which were meant for my daughter alone. I do not know what to do with them for it is not easy to take them out without considerable effort. I am therefore leaving them untouched.

Physical inactivity leads to introspection and varying moods. I am afraid these changing moods are very apparent in the course of these letters, and the method of treatment is not the objective one of a historian. I am no historian. There is an unfortunate mixture of elementary writing for the young and a discussion at times of the ideas of grown-ups. There are numerous repetitions. Indeed of the faults that these letters contain there is no end. They are superficial sketches joined together by a thin thread. I have borrowed my facts and ideas from odd books and many errors may have crept in. It was my intention to have these letters revised by a competent historian, but during my brief period out of prison I have not had the time to make any such arrangement.

In the course of these letters I have often expressed my opinions rather aggressively. I hold to those opinions, but even as I was writing the letters my outlook on history changed gradually. To-day if I had to re-write what I have already written, I would write differently or with a different emphasis. But I cannot tear up what I have written and write afresh.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

January 1, 1934

CONTENTS

Contents of Vol. II follow at the end of this volume.

A BIRTHDAY LETTER

FOR INDIRA PRIYADARSHINI

ON HER THIRTEENTH BIRTHDAY

Central Prison, Naini
October 26[1]*, 1930*

On your birthday you have been in the habit of receiving presents and good wishes. Good wishes you will still have in full measure, but what present can I give you from Naini Prison? My presents cannot be very material or solid. They can only be of the air and of the mind and spirit, such as a good fairy might have bestowed on you—something that even the high walls of prison cannot stop.

You know, sweetheart, how I dislike sermonizing and doling out good advice. When I am tempted to do this I always think of a story of a "very wise man" I once read. Perhaps one day you will yourself read the book which contains this story. Thirteen hundred years ago there came a great traveller from China to India in search of wisdom and knowledge. His name was Hiuen Tsang and over the deserts and mountains of the north he came, braving many dangers, facing and overcoming many obstacles, so great was his thirst for knowledge. And he spent many years in India learning himself and teaching others, especially at the great university of Nalanda, which existed then near the city that was called Pātaliputra and is now known as Patna. Hiuen Tsang became very learned himself and he was

[1] Indira's birthday takes place, according to the Gregorian Calendar, on November 19. It was observed, however, on October 26 according to the *Samvat* era.

given the title of "Master of the Law"—the Law of the Buddha—and he journeyed all over India and saw and studied the people that lived in this great country in those far off days. Later he wrote a book of his travels, and it is this book which contains the story that comes to my mind. It is about a man from South India who came to Karnasuvarna, which was a city somewhere near modern Bhagalpur in Behar; and this man, it is written, wore round his belly and waist copper-plates, and on his head he carried a lighted torch. Staff in hand, with proud bearing and lofty steps, he wandered about in this strange attire. And when any one asked him the reason for his curious get-up, he told him that his wisdom was so great that he was afraid his belly would burst if he did not wear copper-plates round it; and because he was moved with pity for the ignorant people round about him, who lived in darkness, he carried the light on his head.

Well, I am quite sure that there is no danger of my ever bursting with too much wisdom and so there is no need for me to wear copper-plates or armour. And in any event, I hope that my wisdom, such of it as I possess, does not live in my belly. Wherever it may reside, there is plenty of room still for more of it and there is no chance of there being no room left. If I am so limited in wisdom how can I pose as a wise man to others and distribute good advice to all? And so I have always thought that the best way to find out what is right and what is not right, what should be done and what should not be done, is not to give a sermon, but to talk and discuss, and out of the discussion sometimes a little bit of the truth comes out. I have liked my talks with you and we have discussed many things, but the world is wide and beyond our world lie other wonderful and mysterious worlds, so none of us need ever be bored or imagine, like the very foolish and conceited person whose story Hiuen Tsang has told us, that we have learned everything worth learning and become very wise. And perhaps it is as well that we do not become

very wise; for the very wise, if any such there are, must sometimes feel rather sad that there is nothing more to learn. They must miss the joy of discovery and of learning new things—the great adventure that all of us who care may have.

I must not therefore sermonize. But what am I to do then? A letter can hardly take the place of a talk; at best it is a one-sided affair. So, if I say anything that sounds like good advice do not take it as if it was a bad pill to swallow. Imagine that I have made a suggestion to you for you to think over, as if we really were having a talk.

In your history books you read of great periods in the life of nations. We read of great men and women and great deeds performed, and sometimes in our dreams and reveries we imagine ourselves back in those times and doing brave deeds like the heroes and heroines of old. Do you remember how fascinated you were when you first read the story of Jeanne d'Arc, and how your ambition was to do something like her? Ordinary men and women are not usually heroic. They think of their daily bread and butter, of their children, of their household worries and the like. But a time comes when a whole people become full of faith for a great cause, and then even simple, ordinary men and women become heroes, and history becomes stirring and epoch-making. Great leaders have something in them which inspires a whole people and makes them do great deeds.

The year you were born in—1919—was one of the great years of history when a great leader, with a heart full of love and sympathy for the poor and suffering, made his people write a noble and never-to-be-forgotten chapter of history. In the very month you were born, Lenin started his great Revolution which has changed the face of Russia and Siberia. And today in India another great leader, also full of love for all who suffer and passionately eager to help them, has inspired our people to great endeavour and noble sacrifice, so that they may again be free and the

starving and the poor and the oppressed may have their burdens removed from them. Bapuji[2] lies in prison; but the magic of his message steals into the hearts of India's millions, and men and women, and even little children, come out of their little shells and become India's soldiers of freedom. In India today we are making history, and you and I are fortunate to see this happen before our eyes and to take some part ourselves in this great drama.

How shall we bear ourselves in this great movement? What part shall we play in it? I cannot say what part will fall to our lot; but, whatever it may be, let us remember that we can do nothing which may bring discredit to our cause or dishonour to our people. If we are to be India's soldiers we have India's honour in our keeping, and that honour is a sacred trust. Often we may be in doubt as to what to do. It is no easy matter to decide what is right and what is not. One little test I shall ask you to apply whenever you are in doubt. It may help you. Never do anything in secret or anything that you would wish to hide. For the desire to hide anything means that you are afraid, and fear is a bad thing and unworthy of you. Be brave, and all the rest follows. If you are brave, you will not fear and will not do anything of which you are ashamed. You know that in our great Freedom Movement, under Bapuji's leadership, there is no room for secrecy or hiding. We have nothing to hide. We are not afraid of what we do and what we say. We work in the sun and in the light. Even so in our private lives let us make friends with the sun and work in the light and do nothing secretly or furtively. Privacy, of course, we may have and should have, but that is a very different thing from secrecy. And if you do so, my dear, you will grow up a child of the light, unafraid and serene and unruffled, whatever may happen.

[2] Mahatma Gandhi.

I have written to you a very long letter. And yet there is so much I would like to tell you. How can a letter contain it?

You are fortunate, I have said, in being a witness to this great struggle for freedom that is going on in our country. You are also very fortunate in having a very brave and wonderful little woman for your Mummie, and if you are ever in doubt or in trouble you cannot have a better friend.

Good-bye, little one, and may you grow up into a brave soldier in India's service.

With all my love and good wishes.

1

A NEW YEAR'S GIFT

New Year's Day, 1931

Do you remember the letters I wrote to you, more than two years ago, when you were at Mussoorie and I was at Allahabad? You liked them, you told me then, and I have often wondered if I should not continue that series and try to tell you something more about this world of ours. But I have hesitated to do so. It is very interesting to think of the past story of the world and of the great men and women and of the great deeds that it contains. To read history is good, but even more interesting and fascinating is to help in making history. And you know that history is being made in our country today. The past of India is a long, long one, lost in the mists of antiquity; it has its sad and unhappy periods which make us feel ashamed and miserable; but on the whole it is a splendid past of which we may well be proud. We can think of it with pleasure. And yet today we have little leisure to think of the past. It is the future that fills our minds, the future that we are fashioning, and the present that absorbs all our time and energy.

I have had time enough here in Naini Prison to read or write what I wanted to. But my mind wanders and I think of the great struggle that is going on outside; of what others are doing and what I would do if I was with them. I am too full of the present and the future to think of the past. And yet I have felt that this was wrong of me. When I could not take part in the work outside, why should I worry?

But the real reason—shall I whisper it to you?—why I put off writing was another one. I am beginning

to doubt if I know enough to teach you! You are growing up so fast and becoming such a wise little person, that all that I learnt at school and college and after, may not be enough for you, and at any rate may be rather stale. After some time, it may be, that you will take up the role of teacher and teach me many new things! As I told you, in the letter I wrote to you on your last birthday, I am not at all like the Very Wise Man who went about with copper-plates round about him, so that he might not burst with excess of learning.

It was easy enough for me to write about the early days of the world when you were at Mussoorie. For the knowledge we have of those days is vague and indefinite. But as we come out of those very ancient times, history gradually begins, and man begins his curious career in various parts of the world. And to follow man in this career, sometimes wise, more often mad and foolish, is no easy matter. With the help of books one might make an attempt. But Naini Prison does not provide a library. So I am afraid it is not possible for me to give you any connected account of world history, much as I should have liked to do so. I dislike very much boys and girls learning the history of just one country, and that too very often by learning by heart some dates and a few facts. But history is one connected whole and you cannot understand even the history of one country if you do not know what has happened in other parts of the world. I hope you will not learn history in this narrow way, confining it to one or two countries, but will survey the whole world. Remember always that there is not so very much difference between various people as we seem to imagine. Maps and atlases show us countries in different colours. Undoubtedly people differ from one another, but they resemble each other also a great deal, and it is well if we keep this in mind and do not get misled by the colours on the map or by national boundaries.

I cannot write for you the history of my choice. You will have to go to other books for it. But I shall

write to you from time to time something about the past and about the people who lived in the days gone by, and who played a big part on the world's stage.

I do not know if my letters will interest you or awaken your curiosity. Indeed, I do not know when you will see them, or if you will see them at all. Strange that we should be so near and yet so far away! In Mussoorie you were several hundred miles away from me. Yet I could write to you as often as I wished, and run up to you when the desire to see you became strong. But here we are on either side of the Jumna river—not far from each other, but the high walls of Naini Prison keep us effectively apart. One letter a fortnight I may write, and one letter a fortnight I may receive, and once a fortnight I may have a twenty minute interview. And yet these restrictions are good. We seldom value anything which we can get cheaply, and I am beginning to believe that a period in prison is a very desirable part of one's education. Fortunately there are scores of thousands in our country who are having this course today!

I cannot say if you will like these letters when you see them. But I have decided to write them for my own pleasure. They bring you very near to me, and I feel almost that I have had a talk with you. Often enough I think of you, but today you have hardly been absent from my mind. Today is New Year's Day. As I lay in bed, very early in the morning, watching the stars, I thought of the great year that was past, with all its hope and anguish and joy, and all the great and gallant deeds performed. And I thought of Bapuji, who has made our old country young and vigorous again by his magic touch, sitting in his prison cell in Yeravada. And I thought of Dadu[1] and many others. And especially I thought of Mummie and you. Later in the morning came the news that Mummie had been arrested and taken to jail. It was a pleasant New Year's gift for me.

[1] Indira's grandfather, Pandit Motilal Nehru.

It had long been expected and I have no doubt that Mummie is thoroughly happy and contented.

But you must be rather lonely. Once a fortnight you may see Mummie and once a fortnight you may see me, and you will carry our messages to each other. But I shall sit down with pen and paper and I shall think of you. And then you will silently come near me and we shall talk of many things. And we shall dream of the past, and find out ways to make the future greater than the past. So on this New Year's Day let us resolve, that by the time this year also grows old and dies, we shall have brought this bright future dream of ours nearer to the present, and given to India's past a shining page of history.

2

THE LESSON OF HISTORY

January 5, 1931

What shall I write to you, my dear? Where shall I begin? When I think of the past, vast numbers of pictures rush through my mind. Some of the pictures stay longer than others. They are my favourites and I begin to muse about them, and, unconsciously almost, I compare past happenings with what is taking place today, and try to find a lesson in them for my guidance. But what a strange jumble is one's mind, full of disconnected thoughts and ill-arranged pictures, like a gallery with no order in the arrangement of pictures. And yet perhaps the fault is not entirely ours. Most of us could certainly arrange the order of events in our minds better. But sometimes the events themselves are strange and difficult to fit in any scheme of things.

I think I wrote to you once how a study of history should teach us how the world has slowly but surely progressed, how the first simple animals gave place to more complicated and advanced animals, how last of all came the master animal—Man, and how by force of his intellect he triumphed over the others. Man's growth from barbarism to civilization is supposed to be the theme of history. In some of my letters I have tried to show you how the idea of co-operation or working together has grown, and how our ideal should be to work together for the common good. But sometimes, looking at great stretches of history, it is not quite clear that this ideal has made much progress or that we are very civilized or advanced. There is enough of want of co-operation today, of one country or people selfishly attacking or oppressing another, of one man doing this

to another. If after millions of years of progress we are still so backward and imperfect, how much longer will it take us to behave as sensible and reasonable persons? Sometimes we read about past periods of history which seem to be better than ours, more cultured and civilized even, and this makes us doubt if our world is going forward or backward. Our own country has surely had brilliant periods in the past, far better in every way than our present.

It is true that there have been brilliant periods in the past in many countries—in India, Egypt, China, Greece, and elsewhere—and that many of these countries have relapsed and gone back. But even this should not make us lose heart. The world is a big place and the going up or down of one country for a while may not make much difference to the world at large.

Many people nowadays are apt to boast of our great civilization and of the wonders of science. Science has indeed done wonders, and the great men of science are worthy of all respect. But those who boast are seldom the great. And it is well to remember that in many ways man has not made very great progress from the other animals. It may be that in some ways some animals are superior to him still. This may sound a foolish statement, and people who do not know may laugh at it. But you have just read Mæterlinck's Life of the Bee, of the White Ant, and the Ant, and you must have wondered at the social organization of these insects. We look down upon the insects as almost the lowest of living things, and yet these tiny things have learnt the art of co-operation and of sacrifice for the common good far better than man. Ever since I have read of the White Ant and of its sacrifices for its comrades, I have developed a soft corner in my heart for it. If co-operation among themselves and sacrifice for the good of society is one of the tests of civilization, we might say that the White Ant and the Ant are in this respect superior to man.

In one of our old Sanskrit books there is a verse

which can be translated as follows: "For the family sacrifice the individual, for the community the family, for the country the community, and for the Soul the whole world." What the Soul is few of us can know or tell, and each one of us can interpret it in a different way. But the lesson this Sanskrit verse teaches us is the same lesson of co-operation and sacrifice for the larger good. We in India had forgotten this sovereign path to real greatness for many a day, and so we had fallen. But again we seem to have glimpses of it, and all the country is astir. How wonderful it is to see men and women, and boys and girls, smilingly going ahead in India's cause and not caring for a little pain or suffering! Well may they smile and be glad, for the joy of serving in a great cause is theirs; and to those who are fortunate comes the joy of sacrifice also. Today, we are trying to free India. That is a great thing. But an even greater is the cause of humanity itself. And because we feel that our struggle is a part of the great human struggle to end suffering and misery, we can rejoice that we are doing our little bit to help the progress of the world.

Meanwhile, you sit in Anand Bhawan, and Mummie sits in Malacca Jail, and I here in Naini Prison—and we miss each other sometimes, rather badly, do we not? But think of the day when we shall all three meet again! I shall look forward to it, and the thought of it will lighten and cheer up my heart.

3

INQILAB ZINDA BAD

January 7, 1931

Priyadarshini[1]—dear to the sight, but dearer still when sight is denied! As I sat here today to write to you, faint cries, like distant thunder, reached me. I could not make out at first what they were, but they had a familiar ring and they seemed to find an answering echo in my heart. Gradually they seemed to approach and grow in volume, and there was no doubt what they were. "*Inqilāb zinda bād !*" "*Inqilāb zinda bād !*" the prison resounded with the spirited challenge, and our hearts were glad to hear it. I do not know who they were who shouted our war-cry so near us outside the Jail—whether they were men and women from the city or peasants from the villages. Nor do I know the occasion for it today. But whoever they were, they cheered us up, and we sent a silent answer to their greeting and all our good wishes went with it.

Why should we shout "*Inqilāb zinda bād*"? Why should we want revolution and change? India of course wants a big change today. But even after the big change we all want has come and India is independent, we cannot rest quiescent. Nothing in the world that is alive remains unchanging. All nature changes from day to day and minute to minute. Only the dead stop growing and are quiescent. Fresh water runs on, and if you stop it, it becomes stagnant. So also the life of man and the life of a nation. Whether we want to

[1] *Priyadarshini* is Indira's second name and means "dear to the sight."

or not, we grow old. Babies become little girls, and little girls big girls and grown-up women and old women. We have to put up with these changes. But many of us refuse to admit that the world changes. They keep their minds closed and locked up and will not permit any new ideas to come into them. Nothing frightens them so much as the idea of thinking! What is the result? The world moves on inspite of them, and because they and people like them do not adapt themselves to the changing conditions, there are big burst-ups from time to time. Big revolutions take place, like the great French Revolution of a hundred and forty years ago, or the Russian Revolution thirteen years ago. Even so in our own country, we are today in the middle of a revolution. We want independence of course. But we want something more. We want to clean out all the stagnant pools and let in clean fresh water everywhere. We must sweep away the dirt and the poverty and misery from our country. We must also clean up, as far as we can, the cobwebs from the minds of many people which prevent them from thinking and co-operating in the great work before us. It is a great work, and it may be that all this will require time. Let us, at least, give it a good push on—*Inqilāb zinda bād!*

We are at the threshold of our Revolution. What the future will bring we cannot say. But even the present has brought us rich returns for our labours. See the women of India, how proudly they march ahead of all in the struggle! Gentle and yet brave and indomitable, see how they set the pace for others? And the *Purdah*, which hid our brave and beautiful women, and was a curse to them and to their country, where is it now? Is it not rapidly slinking away to take its rightful place in the shelves of museums, where we keep the relics of a bygone age?

See also the children—the boys and girls—the Vānar Sēnās and the Bāl and Bālikā Sabhās. The parents of many of these children may have behaved as cowards or slaves in the past. But who dare doubt that

the children of our generation will tolerate no slavery or cowardice?

And so the wheel of change moves on, and those who were down go up and those who were up go down. It was time it moved in our country. But we have given it such a push this time that no one can stop it.

Inqilāb zinda bād!

4

ASIA AND EUROPE

January 8, 1931

Everything changes continually, I said in my last letter. What is history, indeed, but a record of change? And if there had been very few changes in the past, there would have been little of history to write.

The history we learn in school or college is usually not up to much. I do not know very much about others, but about myself I know that I learnt very little in school. I learnt a little—very little—of the history of India, and a little of the history of England. And even the history of India I learnt was largely wrong or distorted and written by people who looked down upon our country. Of other countries I had the vaguest knowledge of history. It was only after I left college that I read some real history. Fortunately, my visits to prison have given me a chance of improving my knowledge.

I have written to you in some of my old letters about the ancient civilization of India, about the Dravidians and the coming of the Aryans. I have not written much about the days before the Aryans, because I do not know much about them. But it will interest you to know that within the last few years the remains of a very ancient civilization have been discovered in India. These are in the north-west of India round about a place called Mohen-jo Daro. People have dug out these remains of perhaps five thousand years ago and have even discovered mummies in good condition, as they had in old Egypt. Imagine! all this was thousands of years ago, long before the Aryans came. Europe must then have been a wilderness.

Today Europe is strong and powerful, and its peo-

ple consider themselves the most civilized and cultured in the world. They look down upon Asia and her people, and come and grab everything they can get from the countries of Asia. How times have changed! Let us have a good look at this Europe and Asia. Open an atlas and see little Europe sticking on to the great Asiatic Continent. It seems to be just a little extension of it! When you read history you will find that for long periods and stretches of time Asia had been dominant. Her people have gone in wave after wave and conquered Europe. They ravaged Europe and they civilized Europe. Aryans, Scythians, Huns, Arabs, Mongols, Turks—they all came from somewhere in Asia and spread out over Asia and Europe. Asia seemed to produce them in numbers like the locusts. Indeed Europe was for long like a colony of Asia, and many people of modern Europe are descended from these invaders from Asia.

Asia sprawls right across the map like a big lumbering giant. Europe is small. But, of course, this does not mean that Asia is great because of her size or that Europe is not worthy of much attention. Size is the poorest of tests of a man's or a country's greatness. We know well that Europe, though the smallest of continents, is today great. We know also that many of her countries have had brilliant periods of history. They have produced great men of science who have, by their discoveries and inventions, advanced human civilization tremendously and made life easier for millions of men and women. They have had great writers and thinkers, and artists and musicians and men of action. It would be foolish not to recognize the greatness of Europe.

But it would be equally foolish to forget the greatness of Asia. We are apt to be taken in a little by the glitter of Europe and forget the past. Let us remember that it is Asia that has produced great leaders of thought who have influenced the world perhaps more than any one or anything elsewhere—the great founders of the principal religions. Hinduism, the oldest of the great

religions existing today, is of course the product of India. So also is its great sister-religion Buddhism, which now spreads all over China and Japan and Burma and Tibet and Ceylon. The religion of the Jews and Christianity are also Asiatic religions, as their origin was in Palestine on the west coast of Asia. Zoroastrianism, the religion of the Parsis, began in Persia, and you know that Mohammed, the prophet of Islam, was born in Mecca in Arabia. Krishna, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, Mohammed, Confucius and Lao-Tse, the great philosophers of China—you could fill pages with the names of the great thinkers of Asia. You could also fill pages with the names of the great men of action of Asia. And in many other ways I could show you how great and vital was this old continent of ours in the days gone by.

How times changed! But they are changing again even before our eyes. History usually works slowly through the centuries, though sometimes there are periods of rush and burst-ups. Today, however, it is moving fast in Asia, and the old continent is waking up after her long slumber. The eyes of the world are upon her, for everyone knows that Asia is going to play a great part in the future.

5

THE OLD CIVILIZATIONS AND OUR INHERITANCE

January 9, 1931

I read yesterday in the "Bharat", the Hindi newspaper which brings us some news of the outside world twice a week, that Mummie was not being properly treated in the Malacca Jail. Also that she is going to be sent to Lucknow Jail. I was put out a little and I worried. Perhaps there was no truth in the rumour given in the "Bharat". But even a doubt about it is not good to have. It is easy enough to put up with discomfort and suffering. It does everyone good. Otherwise we might grow too soft. But it is not very easy or comforting to think of the suffering of others who are dear to us, especially if we can do nothing for them. And so the doubt that the "Bharat" raised in my mind made me worry about Mummie. She is brave and has the heart of a lioness, but she is weak in body, and I would not like her body to become weaker. What can we do, however stout-hearted we may be, if our bodies fail us? If we want to do any work well, we must have health and strength and perfect bodies.

Perhaps it is as well that Mummie is going to be sent to Lucknow. She may be more comfortable and happier there. There will be some companions in the Lucknow Jail. Probably she is alone in Malacca. Still, it was pleasant to think that she was not far, just four or five miles away from our prison. But this is a foolish fancy. Five miles or a hundred and fifty miles are much the same when the high walls of two prisons intervene.

I was so glad to learn today that Dadu had come back to Allahabad and that he was better. I was also

very pleased to learn that he had gone to see Mummie in Malacca Jail. Perhaps, with luck, I may see all of you tomorrow. For tomorrow is my interview day, and in Jail the *mulāqāt kā din* is a great day. I have not seen Dadu for nearly two months. I shall see him I hope, and satisfy myself that he is really better. And I shall see you after a long, long fortnight, and you will bring me news of yourself and of Mummie.

Heigh-ho! I write on of foolish things although I sat down to write to you about past history. Let us try to forget the present for a while and go back two or three thousand years.

Of Egypt and of ancient Knossos in Crete, I wrote to you a little in some of my previous letters. And I told you that the ancient civilizations took root in these two countries as well as in what is now called Iraq or Mesopotamia, and in China and India and Greece. Greece, perhaps, came a little later than the others. So that the civilization of India, in age, takes rank with its sister-civilizations of Egypt and China and Iraq. And even ancient Greece is a younger sister of these. What happened to these ancient civilizations? Knossos is no more. Indeed, for nearly three thousand years it has been no more. The people of the younger civilization of Greece came and destroyed it. The old civilization of Egypt, after a splendid history lasting for thousands of years, went and left no trace behind it, except the Great Pyramids and the Sphinx, and the ruins of great temples and the mummies and the like. Of course Egypt, the country, is still there and the river Nile flows through it as of old, and men and women live in it as in other countries. But there is no connecting link between these modern people and the old civilization of their country.

Iraq and Persia—how many empires have flourished there and followed each other into oblivion! Babylonia and Assyria and Chaldea, to mention the oldest only. And the great cities of Babylon and Nineveh. The Old Testament in the Bible is full of the record of these peo-

ple. Later, in this very land of ancient history, other empires flourished, and then ceased to flourish. Here was Baghdad, the magic city of the Arabian Nights. But empires come and empires go, and the biggest and proudest of kings and emperors strut on the world's stage for a brief while only. But civilizations endure. In Iraq and Persia, however, the old civilization went utterly, even as the old civilization of Egypt.

Greece in her ancient days was great indeed, and people read even now of her glory with wonder. Even now we stand awed and wonder-struck before the beauty of her marble statuary, and read the fragments of her old literature that have come down to us, with reverence and amazement. It is said, and rightly, that modern Europe is in some ways the child of ancient Greece; so much has Europe been influenced by Greek thought and Greek ways. But the glory that was Greece, where is it now? For ages past, the old civilization has been no more, and other ways have taken its place, and Greece today is but a petty country in the south east of Europe.

Egypt, Knossos, Iraq, and Greece—they have all gone. Their old civilizations, even as Babylon and Nineveh, have ceased to exist. What then of the two other ancients in this company of old civilizations? What of China and India? As in other countries, they too have had empire after empire. There have been invasions and destruction on a vast scale, and loot. Dynasties of kings have ruled for hundreds of years and then been replaced by others. All this has happened in India and China, as elsewhere. But nowhere else, apart from India and China, has there been a real continuity of civilization. Inspite of all changes and battles and invasions, the thread of the ancient civilization has continued to run on in both these countries. It is true that both of them have fallen greatly from their old estate, and the old culture is covered up with a heap of dust, and sometimes filth, which the long ages have accumulated. But still it endures and is the basis of Indian life

even today. New conditions have arisen in the world now; and the coming of the steamship and the railway and the great factory has changed the face of the world. It may be, it is indeed probable, that they will change, as they are changing, the face of India also. But it is interesting and rather wonderful to think of this long range and continuity of Indian culture and civilization, right from the dawn of history, through long ages, down to us. In a sense, we in India are the heirs of these thousands of years. We are in the direct line, it may be, with the ancients, who came down through the north-western mountain passes into the smiling plains of what was to be known as Brahmāvarta and Aryavarta and Bhāratavarsha and Hindustān. Can you not see them trekking down the mountain passes into the unknown land below? Brave and full of the spirit of adventure, they dared to go ahead without fear of the consequences. If death came, they did not mind. They met it laughing. But they loved life and knew that the only way to enjoy life was to be fearless, and not to worry about defeat and disaster. For defeat and disaster have a way of keeping away from those who are not afraid. Think of them, these distant ancestors of ours, marching on and on, and suddenly reaching the banks of the noble Ganga, flowing majestically down to the sea. How the sight must have filled them with joy! And is it any wonder that they bowed down to her and praised her in their rich and melodious language?

It is indeed wonderful to think that we are the heirs of all these ages. But let us not become conceited. If we are the heirs of the ages, we are the heirs of both the good and the bad. And there is a great deal of bad in our present inheritance in India, a great deal that has kept us down in the world, and reduced our noble country to great poverty, and made her a plaything in the hands of others. But have we not decided that this must no longer continue?

6

THE HELLENES

January 10, 1931

None of you came today to interview us and the *mulāqāt kā din* has been rather a blank day. It was a disappointment. And what was worse, was the reason given for the postponement of the interview. We were told that Dadu was not well. More we could not find out. Well, when I found that the interview was not taking place today, I went to my *charkha* and did some spinning. I find that spinning on the *charkha* and weaving *niwār* are delightfully soothing. So, when in doubt, spin!

We compared and contrasted Europe and Asia in my last letter. Let us have a brief look at the old Europe, as it is supposed to have been. For long, Europe meant the countries round about the Mediterranean Sea. We have no records of the northern countries of Europe in those days. Germany and England and France were supposed to be inhabited by wild and barbarous tribes by the people of the Mediterranean. Indeed, to begin with, civilization is supposed to have been confined to the eastern Mediterranean. As you know, Egypt (which, of course, is in Africa and not in Europe) and Knossos were the first countries to go ahead. Gradually the Aryans poured westwards from Asia, and invaded Greece and the neighbouring countries. It is these Aryan Greeks whom we now know and admire as the ancient Greeks. To begin with, I suppose, they were not very different from the Aryans who, perhaps earlier, had descended into India. But changes must have crept in, and gradually the two branches of the Aryan race became more and more different. The Indian Aryans were in-

fluenced greatly by the still older civilization of India—that of the Dravidians, and perhaps the remains of the civilization whose ruins we see at Mohen-jo Daro. The Aryans and the Dravidians gave much to each other and took much from each other also, and thus built up a common culture for India.

In the same way the Aryan Greeks must have been greatly influenced by the older civilization of Knossos which they found flourishing in the Grecian homelands. They were much influenced by it, but they destroyed Knossos and much of its outer civilization also, and on its ruins they built their own civilization. We must remember that the Aryan Greeks as well as the Aryan Indians were, in those early days, rough and hard fighters. They were vigorous, and they destroyed or absorbed the softer and more civilized people they came across.

So Knossos was destroyed nearly a thousand years before Christ was born. And the new Greeks established themselves in Greece and the islands round about. They went by sea to the west coast of Asia Minor, to south Italy and Sicily, and even to the south of France. Marseilles in France was founded by them; but perhaps even before they went, there was a Phoenician settlement there. You will remember that the Phoenicians were a great sea-faring people of Asia Minor who went far and wide in search of trade. They even managed to reach England in those early days when England was a barbarous country, and the long sea voyage through the straits of Gibralter must have been a perilous one.

In the mainland of Greece famous cities grew up: Athens and Sparta and Thebes and Corinth. The early days of the Greeks, or the Hellenes as they were called, were celebrated in two famous epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. You know something about these two epics, which in a way correspond to our own epics, the *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata*. They are said to have been written by Homer, who was blind. The *Iliad*

tells us how Paris carried away the beautiful Helen to his town of Troy, and how the Greek kings and chiefs then laid siege to Troy town to recover Helen. The *Odyssey* is the story of the wanderings of Odysseus or Ulysses on his way back from the siege of Troy. In Asia Minor, not far from the coast, stood this little town of Troy. It exists no more, and for ages past it has ceased to exist; but the genius of a poet has made it immortal.

As the Hellenes or Greeks were growing rapidly to their brief but splendid manhood, it is interesting to notice the quiet birth of another power, which was going to conquer and supplant Greece. Rome is said to have been founded about this time. For several hundred years it was not to play an important part in the world's stage. But the birth of a great city which was to tower over the European world for centuries, and which was to be called the "mistress of the world" and the "Eternal City", is worth mentioning. There are curious stories about the founding of Rome; how Remus and Romulus, who founded it, were taken away and kept by a she-wolf. Perhaps you know the story.

About the time Rome was founded, or a little before, another great city of the ancient world was built. This was Carthage on the north African coast. It was founded by the Phoenicians. It grew into a great sea power, and between it and Rome there was bitter rivalry and many wars. Rome won in the end, and destroyed Carthage utterly.

Let us have just one brief look at Palestine before we finish for the day. Palestine is of course not in Europe, nor has it much historical importance. But many people are interested in its ancient history because it is given in the Old Testament. It is the story of some tribes of the Jews, who lived in this little land, and of the troubles they had with their big neighbours on either side—Babylonia and Assyria, and Egypt. If the story had not become part of the religion of the

Jews and of Christianity, few persons would probably know of it.

About the time Knossos was destroyed, Saul was king of Israel, which was part of Palestine. Later came David, and then Solomon, who had a great reputation for wisdom. I mention these three names because you must have heard of them or read about them.

7

THE GREEK CITY STATES

January 11, 1931

In my last letter I said something about the Greeks or Hellenes. Let us have another look at them and try to have some idea of what they were like. It is very difficult, of course, for us to form a real and truthful idea of something or some people whom we have never seen. We are so used to our present conditions and ways of living that we can hardly imagine an utterly different world. Yet the ancient world, whether in India or China or Greece, was utterly different from the present world. All we can do is to guess with the help of their books and buildings and other remains, what the people in those days were like.

There is one very interesting fact about Greece. The Greeks apparently did not like big kingdoms or empires. They liked little City States, that is to say, each city was an independent State. They were little republics, with the city in the centre and some fields round about from which the food of the city came. A republic, as you know, has no king. These Greek City States had no kings but were governed by the rich citizens. The average man there had little or no say in the government. There were many slaves who had no rights in the government. And women also had no such right. So that only a part of the population of the City States were citizens, and as such could vote on public questions. It was not difficult for these citizens to vote, as all of them could be gathered together in one place. This could only be done, because it was a small City State and not a great big country under one government. Imagine all the voters of India, or

even a province like Bengal or Agra, meeting together! It simply can't be done. This difficulty had to be faced later in other countries, and a solution was found in what is called "representative government." This means that instead of all the voters of a country meeting together to decide on a question, they elect their "representatives", who meet together and consider public question relating to the country and make laws for it. In this way the ordinary voter is supposed to help indirectly in the government of his country.

But this has nothing to do with Greece. Greece avoided this difficult question by not having anything bigger than a City State. Although Greeks spread out, as I have told you, all over Greece and south Italy and Sicily and other coasts of the Mediterranean, they did not try to have an empire or one government for all these places under their control. Everywhere they went they formed their separate City State.

In India, also, you will find that in the early days there were small republics or kingdoms, something like the Greek City State. But apparently they did not last long, and they were absorbed into larger kingdoms. Even so, however, for a very long time our village *panchāyats* had a great deal of power. Perhaps the first impulse of the old Aryans was to have small City States wherever they went. But contact with older civilizations and geographical conditions gradually made them give up this idea in many of the countries they inhabited. In Persia specially, we find large states and empires grow up; in India also there is a tendency for larger kingdoms to grow up. But in Greece the City State continued for long, till a Greek, famous in history, made the first attempt, of which we know of, to conquer the world. This was Alexander the Great. We shall have something to say of him later.

So the Greeks refused to join their little City States together to form a large state, kingdom or republic. Not only did they keep separate and independent, but they were almost always fighting each other. There

was great rivalry between them, often resulting in war.

And yet there were many common links joining these City States together. They had a common language, a common culture and the same religion. Their religion was one of many gods and goddesses, and they had a rich and beautiful mythology like the old Hindu mythology. They worshipped the beautiful. Even now we have a few of their old statues in marble and stone, and they are wondrously beautiful. They believed in having healthy and beautiful bodies, and for this purpose organized games and races. On Mount Olympus, in Greece, used to take place from time to time these games on a big scale, and people from all over Greece gathered together there. You must have heard of the Olympic games taking place even now. The name has been taken from the old Greek games on Mt. Olympus and applied to games and championships between different countries.

So the Greek City States lived separately, meeting each other at their games and at some places, and fighting each other frequently. When a great danger came from outside, however, they did unite to resist it. This was the Persian invasion about which we shall have something to say at a later stage.

8

EMPIRES IN WESTERN ASIA

January 13, 1931

It was good to see you all yesterday. But I had a shock to see Dadu. He was looking so weak and ill. Look after him well and make him fit and strong again. I could hardly speak to you yesterday. What can one do in a short interview? I try to make up for all the interviews and talks we have not had by writing these letters. But they are poor substitutes, and the make-believe does not last long! Still it is good sometimes to play make-believe.

Let us go back to the ancients. We have been with the old Greeks lately. What were the other countries like about this time? We need not trouble ourselves much about the other countries of Europe. We do not, or at any rate I do not, know anything very interesting about them. The climate of northern Europe had probably been changing and this must have resulted in new conditions. Long, long ago, you may perhaps remember, it was very cold all over northern Europe and northern Asia. This was called the Ice Age, and huge glaciers came right down to central Europe. There was no man then probably, or even if there was man, he was more of an animal than human. You may wonder how we can say now that there were glaciers in those days. There can, of course, be no record of them in any books, for there were no books or the writers of books in those days. But you have not forgotten the book of Nature, I hope. Nature has a way of writing her own history in her rocks and stones, and all who wish it may read it there. It is a kind of autobiography—that is, one's own history. Now,

glaciers have a way of leaving very peculiar marks of their existence. You can hardly mistake them once you get to recognize them. And if you want to study these marks, all you have to do is to go to any of our present glaciers in the Himalayas or the Alps or elsewhere. You have yourself seen the glaciers round about Mont Blanc in the Alps, but perhaps no one pointed out to you then these special marks. There are plenty of fine glaciers in Kashmir and in other parts of the Himalayas. The nearest glacier for us is the Pindari glacier, which is about a week's march from Almora. I went there once when I was a small boy—much younger than you are now—and I still remember it vividly.

Instead of history and the past, I have drifted into glaciers and the Pindari! That comes of the game of make-believe. I want, if possible, to talk to you as if you were here, and if I do so we must surely have little excursions occasionally to glaciers and the like.

We started discussing glaciers because of my reference to the Ice Age. We can say that glaciers came down to central Europe and to England, because we can still find the peculiar marks of glaciers in these countries. They are to be found on the old rocks, and this makes us think that it was very cold all over central and northern Europe then. Later it became warmer and the glaciers gradually shrank. Geologists, the people who study the history of the Earth, tell us that this cold spell was succeeded by a warm spell when it was warmer than it is even today in Europe. Owing to this warmth, dense forests grew up in Europe.

The Aryans in their wanderings reached central Europe also. They do not appear to have done anything very remarkable there at this period, so we can for the moment ignore them. The civilized people of Greece and the Mediterranean probably looked upon these people of central and northern Europe as barbarians. But these "barbarians" were living a healthy and warlike life in their forests and villages, and uncon-

sciously preparing themselves for the day when they were to swoop down and topple over the governments of the more civilized people of the south. But this happened long afterwards and we need not anticipate.

If we know little about north Europe, we know nothing at all about great continents and tracts of country. America is supposed to have been discovered by Columbus, but that does not mean, as we are finding out now, that civilized people did not exist there before Columbus. But anyhow, we know nothing of America in those early days of which we are speaking. Nor do we know anything about the continent of Africa, Egypt of course being excepted, and also the coast of the Mediterranean. Egypt was at this period probably at the decline of her great and ancient civilization. But even so it was a very advanced country in those days.

We have now to consider what was happening in Asia. Here, as you know, there were three centres of ancient civilization, the Mesopotamian, the Indian, and the Chinese.

In Mesopotamia and Persia and Asia Minor, empire after empire came and went even in those early days. There was the Assyrian Empire, the Median, the Babylonian, and later the Persian. We need not go into the details of how these empires fought each other, or remained at peace for a while side by side, or destroyed each other. You will notice the difference between the Greek City States and the empires of western Asia. From very early days there appears to have been a passion for a great state or empire in these countries. Perhaps it was due to their older civilization, or perhaps other causes.

One name might interest you. It is that of Crœsus. You must have heard it. To be as rich as Crœsus has become a well-known saying in English. You may also have read stories of this Crœsus, of how proud he was and how he was humbled. Crœsus was the king of a country called Lydia, which was on the west coast

of Asia, where Asia Minor is today. Being a country touching the sea, probably there was a great deal of trade there. Crœsus is said to have been very rich. In his time the Persian Empire under Cyrus was growing and becoming powerful. Cyrus and Crœsus came into conflict and Cyrus defeated Crœsus. The story of this defeat and how in his misery wisdom and sense came to the proud Crœsus is told us by a Greek writer of history, Herodotus.

Cyrus had a great empire probably right up to India in the East. But one of his successors, Darius, had an even greater empire. It included Egypt and a bit of central Asia, and even a small part of India near the Indus river. It is said that a huge quantity of gold dust used to be sent to him from this Indian province of his as tribute. In these days there must have been gold dust near the Indus river. There is none to be found there now. Indeed, the country is largely waste land. This shows how the climate must have changed.

As you will read history and think of past conditions and compare them with present conditions, one of the things that will interest you most is the change in central Asia. This was the place from where issued innumerable tribes, hordes of men and women, who spread out over distant continents. This was the place which had great and mighty cities in the past, rich and populous, comparable to the great European capitals of today, cities far bigger than Calcutta or Bombay today. There were gardens and greenery everywhere, and a delightful temperate climate, neither too cold nor too hot. All this it was. And now, for many hundreds of years, it has been a bare, inhospitable country, almost a desert. Some of the great cities of the past still linger on—Samarqand and Bokhara, their very names bring up hosts of memories—but they are ghosts of their former selves.

But I am again anticipating. In the ancient days which we were considering there was no Samarqand or

Bokhara. All this was to come. The veil of the future hid it, and the greatness and the fall of central Asia was still to be.

9

THE BURDEN OF OLD TRADITION

January 14, 1931

I have developed strange habits in prison. One of these is the habit of getting up very early, earlier even than the dawn. I began this last summer, and I liked to watch the coming of the dawn and the way it gradually put out the stars. Have you ever seen the moonlight before the dawn and the slow change to day? Often I have watched this contest between the moonlight and the dawn, in which the dawn always wins. In the strange half-light, it is difficult to say for some time whether it is the moonlight or the light of the coming day. And then almost suddenly there is no doubt of it and it is day, and the pale moon retires, beaten from the contest.

According to my habit, I got up today when the stars were still out, and one could only guess that the morning was coming by that strange something which is in the air just before the dawn. And as I sat reading, the calm of the early morning was broken into by distant voices and rumblings, ever growing stronger. I remembered that it was the *Sankrānti* day, the first big day of the *Māgh Melā*, and the pilgrims were marching in their thousands for their morning dip at the Sangam, where the Ganga meets the Jumna and the invisible Sarasvatī is also supposed to join. And as they marched they sang and sometimes cheered mother Ganga—*Gangā Māī kī Jai*—and their voices reached me over the walls of Naini prison. As I listened to them I thought of the power of faith which drew these vast numbers to the river, and made them forget for a while their poverty and their misery. And I thought how year after year, for

how many hundred or thousand years, the pilgrims had marched to the *Trivenī*. Men may come and men may go, and governments and empires may lord it awhile and then disappear into the past; but the old tradition continues, and generation after generation bows down to it. Tradition has much of good in it, but sometimes it becomes a terrible burden, which makes it difficult for us to move. It is fascinating to think of the unbroken chain which connects us with the dim and distant past, to read accounts of these *melās* written thirteen hundred years ago—and the *melā* was an old tradition even then. But this chain has a way of clinging on to you when you want to move on, and of making you almost a prisoner in the grip of this tradition. We shall have to keep many of the links with our past, but we shall also have to break through the prison of tradition where it prevents us from our onward march.

In our last three letters we have been trying to form a picture of what the world was like between three thousand and two thousand five hundred years ago. I have not mentioned any dates. I do not like them, and I do not want you to trouble yourself much with them. It is also not easy to know the correct dates of happenings in these olden times. Later, it may be necessary occasionally to give and to remember a few dates to help us to keep the facts in proper order in our minds. For the present we are trying to have an idea of the ancient world.

We have had a glimpse of Greece and the Mediterranean, of Egypt, of Asia Minor and Persia. Let us now come back to our own country. We have one great difficulty in studying the early history of India. The early Aryans here—or the Indo-Aryans as they are called—cared to write no histories. We have seen already in our earlier letters how great they were in many ways. The books they have produced—the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Rāmāyana*, the *Mahābhārata*, and other books—could not have been written by any one who was not a great person. These books and other material help us

in studying past history. They tell us the manners and customs, the ways of thinking and living of our ancestors. But they are not proper history. The only real history in Sanskrit, but of a much later period, is a history of Kashmir. This is called the *Rājatarangini*, the chronicle of the kings of Kashmir, and was written by Kalhana. You will be interested to learn that as I am writing these letters to you Ranjit Puphā[1] is translating this great history of Kashmir from the Sanskrit. He has nearly finished half of it. It is a very big book. When the full translation is ready, and it comes out, we shall all of course read it eagerly, for unfortunately most of us do not know enough Sanskrit to read the original. We shall read it not only because it is a fine book, but also because it will tell us a great deal about the past and especially about Kashmir which, as you know, is our old homeland.

When the Aryans entered India, India was already civilized. Indeed it now appears certain from the remains at Mohen-jo Daro in the north-west that a great civilization existed here for long before the Aryans came. But about this we do not know much yet. Probably within a few years we shall know more when our archæologists, the men who make a special study of old ruins, have dug out all that there is to be found there.

Even apart from this, however, it is clear that the Dravidians had a rich civilization then in southern India, and perhaps also in northern India. Their languages, which are not the daughters of the Aryan Sanskrit, are very old and have fine literatures. These languages are Tamil, Telugu, Kanarese and Malayālam. All these languages still flourish in South India, in the provinces of Madras and Bombay, as the British Government has divided India. Perhaps you know that the National Congress has been far more sensible and has

[1] Ranjit S. Pandit.

divided India on the basis of language. This is far better as it brings one kind of people, speaking one language and generally having similar customs, in one provincial area. The Congress provinces in the South are the Andhra-desha or the Andhra province in north Madras, where Telugu is spoken; the Tāmil Nād, or the Tamil province where Tamil is spoken; Kanara, which is south of Bombay, and where Kannada or Canarese is spoken; and Kerala, which corresponds roughly with Malabar, where Malayālam is spoken. There can be no doubt that in future provincial divisions of India, a great deal of attention will be paid to the language of the area.

Here I might as well say a little more about the languages of India. Some people in Europe and elsewhere imagine that there are hundreds of languages in India. This is perfectly absurd and any one who says so only shows his own ignorance. In a big country like India there are of course numerous dialects, that is, local variations of a language. There are also many hill tribes and other small groups in various parts of the country with special languages. But all these are unimportant when you take India as a whole. Only from the point of view of the census are they important. The real languages of India, as I think I mentioned in one of my earlier letters, belong to two families, the Dravidian, to which we have referred above, and the Indo-Aryan. The principal Indo-Aryan language was Sanskrit, and all the Indo-Aryan languages of India are daughters of Sanskrit. These are Hindi, Bengali, Gujerati, Marathi. There are also some other variations. In Assam there is the Assamese, and in Orissa or Utkal the Uriya language is used. Urdū is a variation of Hindi. The world Hindustani is used to mean both Hindi and Urdū. Thus the principal languages of India are just ten. Hindustani, Bengali, Gujerati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Canarese, Malayālam, Uriya and Assamese. Of these Hindustani, which is our mother-tongue, is spoken all over northern India—in the Punjab, United Provinces,

Behar, Central Provinces, Rajputana, Delhi and Central India. This is a huge area inhabited by about one hundred and thirty million people. So you see that already a hundred and thirty million speak Hindustani, with minor variations, and, as you know well, Hindustani is understood in most parts of India. It is likely to become the common language of India. But this of course does not mean that the other principal languages, which I have mentioned above, should disappear. They should certainly remain as provincial languages for they have fine literatures, and one should never try to take away a well-developed language from a people. The only way for a people to grow, for their children to learn, is through their own language. In India today everything is topsy-turvy, and we use English a great deal amongst ourselves even. It is perfectly ridiculous for me to write to you in English—and yet I am doing so! We shall get out of the habit soon, I hope.

10

THE VILLAGE REPUBLICS OF ANCIENT INDIA

January 15, 1931

How are we to make any progress with our review of past history? I am always leaving the main line and going along side-tracks. In my last letter, just when I was getting on to the subject, I started off on the languages of India.

Let us go back to old India. You know that what is Afghanistan today was then, and for a long time afterwards, a part of India. The north-west of India was called Gāndhāra. All over the north, in the plains of the Indus and the Ganges, there were big settlements of the Aryans. These Aryan immigrants probably knew the art of building well, for many of them must have come from the Aryan settlements in Persia and Mesopotamia, where there were great cities even then. In between the Aryan settlements there were many forests. Especially between North India and the South there was a great forest. It is unlikely that any large numbers of Aryans went through this forest to settle down in the South. But many individuals must have gone to explore and to trade and to carry the Aryan culture and traditions to the South. The old tradition tells us that the first Aryan to go to the South was the Rishi Agastya. He carried the message of Aryan religion and culture to the Deccan.

A considerable trade already flourished between India and foreign countries. The pepper and gold and pearls of the South attracted foreign traders across the sea. Rice also probably went out. Teakwood from Malabar has been found in ancient palaces in Babylonia.

Gradually the Aryans evolved their village system in India. This had something of the old Dravidian village and something of Aryan ideas. These villages were almost independent and were governed by their elected *panchāyats*. A number of villages or small towns were joined together under a Raja or chief, who was sometimes elected and sometimes hereditary. Often different village groups co-operated with each other in order to build roads, rest-houses, canals for irrigation, and such like communal things, which were for the common good. It appears that the Raja, although he was the chief man in his State, could not do just what he liked. He was himself subject to Aryan laws and customs, and he could be deposed or fined by his people. There was no such thing as *L'état c'est moi*, to which I referred in my old letters. Thus there was a kind of democracy in the Aryan settlements, that is to say, the Aryan inhabitants could to some extent control the government.

Compare these Indo-Aryans to the Aryan Greeks. There are many differences, and yet there are many points in common. There is some kind of democracy in both places. But let us always remember that this democracy was more or less confined to the Aryans themselves. Their slaves, or those whom they placed in low castes, had no democracy or freedom. The caste system, with its innumerable divisions, as we know it, did not exist then. In those days there are supposed to have been, among the Indian Aryans, four divisions of society, or four castes. These were the *Brahmans* or learned men, priests, sages; the *Kshattriyas* or rulers; *Vaishyas* or merchants and the men engaged in commerce; and *Shūdras* or the labourer and worker class. These divisions were thus based on occupation. Partly the caste system might have been based on the desire of the Aryans to keep themselves aloof from the conquered race. The Aryans were sufficiently proud and conceited to look down upon all others, and they did not want their people to get mixed up with the others. The very

word for caste in Sanskrit is *varna* or colour. This also shows that the Aryans who came were fairer in complexion than the original inhabitants of India.

Thus we have to bear in mind that, on the one side, the Aryans kept down the worker class and did not allow it any share in their democracy; on the other, they had a great deal of freedom among themselves. They would not allow their kings or rulers to misbehave; and if any ruler misbehaved, he was removed. Kings were usually Kshattriyas, but sometimes, during wars and times of difficulty even a Shudra, or a member of the lowest class, could win a throne, if he was able enough. In later days the Aryans degenerated and their caste system became rigid. Too many divisions made the country weak, and it fell. They also forgot their old idea of freedom. For, in the old days it was said that never shall an Aryan be made a slave. For him death was preferable to dishonour of the Aryan name.

The settlements of the Aryans, the towns and villages, did not grow up in a haphazard way. They were made according to plans; and geometry, you will be interested to know, had a good deal to do with these plans. Indeed geometrical figures were also used then in Vedic *pūjās*. Even now in many Hindu households some of these figures are used during various *pūjās*. Now geometry is very closely connected with the building of houses and towns. The old Aryan village was at first probably a kind of fortified camp. There was always fear of enemy attack in those days. Even when there was no danger of enemy attacks the same plan continued. The plan would be like a rectangle, with walls all round, and four big gates and four small ones. Inside these walls were the streets in a special order and the houses. In the centre of the village there was the *Panchāyat ghar*, where the village elders met. In small villages instead of this *Panchāyat ghar* there would be just a big tree. Every year all the freemen of the village would meet to elect their *panchāyat*.

Many learned men used to retire into the forests,

near the towns and villages, in order to lead simple lives, or to study and work in quiet. Pupils gathered round them, and gradually fresh settlements grew up of these teachers and their students. We can consider these settlements as universities. There were not many fine buildings there, but those who sought knowledge came from long distances to these places of learning.

Opposite Anand Bhawan is Bharadwāj Ashram. You know it well. Perhaps you also know that Bharadwāj is supposed to have been a very learned man in the old days of the Rāmāyana. Rāmachandra is said to have visited him during his exile. It is stated that thousands of pupils and students lived with him. There may have been quite a university, with Bharadwāj as its head. In those days the Ashram was on the banks of the Ganga. This is very likely, although now the river is nearly a mile away. The soil of our garden is, in some places, very sandy and may have been part of the bed of the Ganga in those days.

Those early days were the great period of Aryans in India. Unfortunately we have no history of this period, and can only rely on non-historical books for such facts as we know. Among the kingdoms and republics of those days were Magadha, in South Behar; Videha, in North Behar; Kāshī, or Benares; Koshala, of which the capital was Ayodhyā (the modern Fyzabad); and the Panchālas, between the Ganga and the Jumna. In the country of these Panchālas the two chief cities were Mathurā and Kānyakubja. Both these cities were famous in later history also. Both exist still, Kānyakubja under the name Kanauj, near Cawnpore. Ujjain is also a modern town, though a small one now, which existed in those early days. It is now in Gwalior State.

Near Pātaliputra or Patna, there was the city of Vaisāli. This was the capital city of a famous clan in early Indian history—the Lichchhavi clan. This state was a republic and was governed by an assembly

of notables with an elected president, who was called the *Nāyaka.*

As time passed, large towns and cities grew up. Trade increased and the arts and crafts of the artisan prospered. The cities became big trading centres. The ashrams in the forests, where the learned Brahmans lived with their pupils, also grew up into large university towns. And in these centres of learning every kind of subject, that was then known, was taught. The Brahmans even taught the science of war. You will remember that the great teacher of the Pāndavas in the Mahabhārat was Dronāchārya, a Brahman. He taught them, among other things, the way to fight.

11

A THOUSAND YEARS OF CHINA

January 16, 1931

News has come from the outside world—news that disturbs and grieves, and yet that fills one with pride and joy. We have heard of the fate of the Sholapur people. We have also had some brief accounts of what happened all over the country when this sad news was known. It is difficult to sit here quietly when our young men are giving their lives and thousands of men and women are facing the brutal *lāthi*. But it is good training for us. I suppose each one of us will have opportunities to test himself or herself to the utmost. Meanwhile it does one's heart good to know how our people dare to go ahead to meet suffering, how each additional weapon and blow of the enemy makes them stronger and more determined to resist.

It is difficult to think of other matters when the news of the day fills one's mind. But empty musing does not help much, and if we have to do any solid work we must control our minds. Let us therefore go back to old times and live for a while far away from our present troubles.

Let us go to India's sister in ancient history—China. In China and in the other countries of eastern Asia, like Japan, Korea, Indo-China, Siam and Burma, we have not to deal with the Aryan people. We have here the Mongolian races.

About five thousand years ago or more there was an invasion of China from the west. These invading tribes also came from central Asia and were fairly advanced in their civilization. They knew agriculture and kept large flocks and herds of cattle. They built

good houses and had a well developed society. They settled down near the Hoang Ho, which is also called the Yellow River. Here they organized their State. For many hundreds of years they continued spreading over China and improving their arts and crafts. The Chinese people were largely farmers and their chiefs were really patriarchs of the kind I have described to you in my old letters. Six or seven hundred years later, that is more than four thousand years ago from now, we find a person named Yao calling himself emperor. But inspite of this title he was more of a patriarch than an emperor of the kind Egypt or Mesopotamia had. The Chinese people continued to live as farmers, and there was not much of a central government.

I have told you how the patriarchs used to be elected by their people, and later how they became hereditary. We see that happening in China. Yao was not succeeded by his son, but he nominated another person who was considered the most capable man in the country. Soon, however, the title became hereditary and it is said that for more than four hundred years the Hsia dynasty ruled China. The last Hsia ruler was very cruel and there was a revolution which overthrew him. Another dynasty, called the Shang or Yin dynasty, then became the rulers. This lasted for nearly six hundred and fifty years.

In a little paragraph, in two or three short sentences, I have disposed of China's history for more than a thousand years. Wonderful, is it not? What can one do with these expanses of history? But you must realize that my little paragraph does not lessen the length of these thousand or eleven hundred years. We are used to thinking in terms of days and months and years. It is difficult for you to have a clear idea of even a hundred years. Your thirteen years seem a lot, do they not? And each additional year makes you so much bigger. How then can you get hold, in your mind, of a thousand years of history? It is a long time. Generation after generation comes and goes, and

towns grow into great cities and then crumble away, and fresh cities take their place. Think of the last thousand years of history, and then perhaps you will have some idea of this long period. What amazing changes have taken place in these thousand years in the world!

It is a wonderful thing, the history of China, with its long tradition of culture, and its dynasties, each lasting for five hundred years or even eight hundred years or more.

Think of the slow progress and development of China during these eleven hundred years I have disposed of in a paragraph. Gradually the patriarchal system gives way and the central government develops. A well-organized State appears. Even in these ancient times China knew writing. But Chinese writing, as you know, is very different from our writing or from the writing of English and French. It has not got an alphabet. It is written in symbols or pictures.

The Shang dynasty after six hundred and forty years, of rule was upset by a revolution, and a new dynasty, the Chou dynasty, came into power. This had an even longer period of power than the Shang. It lasted for 867 years. It was under the Chou dynasty that a well-organized Chinese State appears. It was also during this period that the two great philosophers of China, Confucius and Lao-Tse, lived. We shall have something to say about them later.

When the Shang dynasty was driven out, one of its high officials named Ki-Tse preferred exile to serving the Chous. So he marched with 5000 followers out of China into Korea. He called the country *Chosen* or the 'Land of the Morning Calm'. Korea, or Chosen, is east of China, so Ki-Tse went east towards the rising sun. Perhaps he then thought that he had reached the easternmost country, and therefore gave it this name. With Ki-Tse begins the history of Korea from 1100 years before Christ. Ki-Tse brought to his new country Chinese arts and crafts, and house-building, and agri-

culture, and silk-making. More Chinese immigrants followed Ki-Tse. Ki-Tse's descendants ruled Chosen for over 900 years.

Chosen was not of course the most eastern country. East of it, as we know, is Japan. But we have no knowledge of what was happening in Japan when Ki-Tse went to Chosen. Japanese history is not nearly so old as that of China or even Korea or Chosen. The Japanese say that their first emperor was named Jimmu Tenno and that he ruled six or seven hundred years before Christ. He is supposed by them to have been a descendant of the Sun goddess, for the Sun was considered a goddess in Japan. The present Emperor of Japan is said to be a direct descendant of this Jimmu Tenno, and is thus also believed by many Japanese to be a descendant of the sun.

You know that in our country, the Rajputs also in the same way say that they go back to the sun and the moon. Their two principal houses are the *Sūryavañshi*, or the Race of the Sun, and the *Chandravañshi*, or the Race of the Moon. The Maharana of Udaipur is the head of the Sūryavañshis, and he traces his pedigree far back into the past. Wonderful people are our Rajputs, and of the stories of their valour and chivalry there is no end.

12

THE CALL OF THE PAST

January 17, 1931

We have now had a brief look on the ancient world as it probably was up to about two thousand five hundred years ago. Our survey has been very brief and very limited. We have only dealt with the countries which were fairly advanced or which have some kind of definite history. In Egypt we have just mentioned the great civilization which produced the pyramids and the Sphinx and many other things which we cannot go into now. This great civilization seems to have had its day and was on the decline even at this early period which we are considering. Knossos was also nearing its end. In China we have traced vast periods of time during which it grew into a great central empire and developed writing and silk-making and many beautiful things. We have had a glimpse of Korea and Japan. In India we have just hinted at the old civilization represented now by the ruins at Mohen-jo Daro in the Indus valley; and the Dravidian civilization with its trade with foreign countries; and lastly the Aryans. We have referred to some of the famous books which the Aryans produced in those days, the *Vedas* and *Upanishads,* and the epics the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata.* And we have followed them spreading out over northern India, and even penetrating to the South and, in contact with the old Dravidians, building up a new civilization and culture, which had something of the Dravidian in it and a great deal of the Aryan. Especially have we seen their village communities grow up on a democratic basis and develop into towns and cities, and forest *ashrams* become universities. In Mesopotamia

and Persia we have only briefly referred to the growth of empire after empire; one of these later empires, that of Darius, extending to the river Indus in India. In Palestine we have had a glimpse of the Hebrews, who though few in number and living in a tiny corner of the world, have attracted a great deal of attention. Their kings, David and Solomon, are remembered when greater kings have been forgotten, because they find mention in the Bible. In Greece we have seen the new Aryan civilization grow up on the ruins of the older civilization of Knossos. The City States have grown up and Greek colonies have sprung up on the borders of the Mediterranean. Rome, which was to be great, and Carthage, its bitter rival, are just appearing on the horizon of history.

All this we have barely glimpsed. I could have told you something of the countries which we have not mentioned—the countries of northern Europe and south-eastern Asia. Even in these early days Indian sea-men from South India ventured across the Bay of Bengal to the Malay peninsula and to the islands south of it. But we must draw the line somewhere or else we shall never get on.

The countries we have dealt with are supposed to belong to the ancient world. But remember that in those days there was not much communication between distant countries. Adventurous sailors went across the seas and some persons undertook long land journeys for trade or other purposes. But this must have been rare. The peril was great. Geography was little known. The earth was supposed to be flat and not round. So that no one knew much about any countries except those which were near. Thus people in Greece knew practically nothing of China or India, and the Chinese or Indians knew very little about the countries of the Mediterranean.

Have a look at a map of the ancient world, if you can find one. Some of the descriptions of the world and maps of the old writers are amusing. In those maps

the several countries assume extraordinary shapes. Maps of ancient times prepared now are much more helpful and I hope you will often consult them when reading about these times. A map helps greatly. Without it, we can have no real idea of history. Indeed, to learn history one should have as many maps and as many pictures as possible; pictures of old buildings, ruins, and such remains of those times as have come down. These pictures fill up the dry skeleton of history and make it live for us. History, if we are to learn anything from it, must be a succession of vivid images in our mind, so that when we read it, we can almost see events happening. It should be a fascinating play which grips us. A comedy sometimes, more often a tragedy, of which the stage is the world, and the players the great men and women of the past.

Pictures and maps help a little to open our eyes to this pageant of history. They should be within reach of every boy and girl. But better even than pictures is a personal visit to the ruins and remains of old history. It is not possible to see all of these, for they are spread out all over the world. But we can always find some remains of the past within easy reach of us, if we keep our eyes wide open. The big museums collect the smaller remains and relics. In India there are plenty of remains of past history, but of the very ancient days, there are very few. Mahen-jo Daro and Harappa are perhaps the only instances so far. It may be that many of the very old buildings crumbled to dust in the hot climate. It is much more likely, however, that many of them lie still under the surface of the soil, waiting to be dug up. And as we dig them up and find old relics and inscriptions, the past history of our country will gradually open its pages to us, and we shall read in these pages of stone and brick and mortar, what our ancestors did in the old, old times.

You have been to Delhi, and you have seen some of the ruins and old buildings round about the present city. When you see them again, think of the past and they

will carry you back and tell you more history than any book. Right from the days of the *Mahābhārata* have people lived in Delhi city or near it, and they have called it by many names : Indraprastha, Hastināpur, Tughlaqābād, Shāhjahānābād—I do not even know all these names. Tradition tells us that there have been seven cities of Delhi on seven different sites, always moving because of the vagaries of the river Jumna. And now we see an eighth city—Raisina or New Delhi—rising up at the command of the present rulers of this country. Empire after empire has flourished in Delhi and has gone.

Or, go to Benares or Kāshī, that most ancient of cities, and give ear to her murmuring. Does she not tell you of her immemorial past—of how she has gone on while empires have decayed, of Buddha who came to her with his new gospel, of the millions who have gone to her through the ages to find peace and solace? Old and hoary, decrepit, dirty, smelly, and yet much alive and full of the strength of ages, is Benares. Full of charm and wonderful is Kāshī, for in her eyes you can see the past of India, and in the murmur of her waters you can hear the voices of ages long gone by.

Or, let us go nearer still to the old Ashoka pillar in our city of Allahabad or Prayag. See the inscription carved on it at the bidding of Ashoka, and you can almost hear his voice across two thousand years.

13

WHERE DO RICHES GO TO ?

January 18, 1931

In my letters to you which I sent to Mussoorie, I tried to show you how different classes of people developed as man advanced. The early men had a hard life even to find food. They hunted and gathered nuts and fruits from day to day, and wandered from place to place in search of food. Gradually tribes grew up. These were really large families living together and hunting together, because it was safer to be together than alone. Then came a great change—the discovery of agriculture. This made a tremendous difference. People found it much easier to grow food on the land by the methods of agriculture than to hunt all the time. And ploughing and sowing and harvesting meant living on the land. They could not just wander about as they used to, but had to remain near their fields. So grew up villages and towns.

Agriculture also brought about other changes. The food that was produced by the land was much more than could be used up at once. This excess or surplus was stored up. Life became a little more complicated than it used to be in the old days of hunting, and different classes of people did the actual work in the fields and elsewhere and some the managing and organizing. The managers and organizers gradually became more powerful, and became patriarchs and rulers and kings and nobles. And, having the power to do so, they kept for themselves a great deal of the excess or surplus food that was produced. Thus they became richer, while those who worked in the fields got just enough food to live. A time came later when these managers

and organizers became too lazy or incompetent to do any work of organizing even. They did nothing, but they took good care to take a fat share of the food produced by the workers. And they began to think that they had every right to live in this way on the labour of others without doing anything themselves.

So you will see that the coming of agriculture made a vast difference to life. By improving the method of getting food, by making it easier to get it, agriculture changed the whole basis of society. It gave people leisure. Different classes grew up. Everybody was not busy in getting food, so some people took to other work. Various kinds of crafts grew up and new professions were formed. Power however chiefly rested with the organizing class.

You will find in later history also how great changes have been brought about by new ways of producing food and other things. Man began to require many other things almost as much as food. So that any great change in the methods of production resulted in great changes in society. To give you one big instance of it : when steam was applied to working factories and moving railways and ships, a great change was made in the methods of production and distribution. The steam factories could make things far more quickly than the artisans and craftsmen could with their hands or little tools. The big machine was really an enormous tool. And the railway and the steamship helped in taking food and the things made by factories quickly to distant countries. You can well imagine what difference this must have made all over the world.

New and quicker ways of producing food and other things have been discovered in history from time to time. And you will of course think that if better methods are used for production, much more will be produced, and the world will be richer and every one will have more. You will be partly correct and partly wrong. Better methods of production have certainly made the world richer. But which part of the world? It is obvious

enough that there is great poverty and misery still in our country, of course, but even in a rich country like England. Why is this so ? Where do the riches go to ? It is a strange thing that in spite of more and more wealth being produced, the poor have remained poor. They have made some little progress in certain countries, but it is very little compared to the new wealth produced. We can easily see, however, where this wealth largely goes to. It goes to those who, usually being the managers or organizers, see to it that they get the lion's share of everything good. And stranger still, classes have grown up in society of people who do not even pretend to do any work, and yet who take this lion's share of the work of others ! And—would you believe it ?—these classes are honoured; and some foolish people imagine that it is degrading to have to work for one's living ! Such is the topsy-turvy condition of our world. Is it surprising that the peasant in his field and the worker in his factory is poor, although they produce the food and wealth of the world ? We talk of freedom for our country, but what will any freedom be worth unless it puts an end to this topsy-turvydom, and gives to the man who does the work the fruits of his toil ? Big, fat books have been written on politics and the art of government, on economics and how the nation's wealth should be distributed. Learned professors lecture on these subjects. But, while people talk and discuss, those who work, suffer. Two hundred years ago a famous Frenchman, Voltaire, said of politicians and the like that "they have discovered in their fine politics the art of causing those to die of hunger who, cultivating the earth, give the means of life to others."

Still, ancient man advanced and gradually encroached upon wild nature. He cut the forests and built the houses and tilled the land. Man is supposed to have conquered Nature to some extent. People talk of the conquest of Nature. This is loose talk and is not quite correct. It is far better to say that man has begun to understand Nature, and the more he has under-

stood the more he has been able to co-operate with Nature and to utilize it for his own purposes. In the old days men were afraid of Nature and of natural phenomena. Instead of trying to understand them, they tried to worship and offer peace offerings. As if Nature was a wild beast which had to be appeased and cajoled. Thus thunder and lightning and epidemic diseases frightened them, and they thought that these could be prevented only by offerings. Many simple people think that an eclipse of the sun and moon is a terrible calamity. Instead of trying to understand that it is a very simple natural occurrence, people needlessly excite themselves about it, and fast and bathe to protect the sun or the moon! The sun and the moon are quite capable of looking after themselves. We need not worry about them.

We have talked of the growth of civilization and culture, and we have seen the beginnings of this when people settled down to live in villages and towns. The greater quantity of food that they got gave them more leisure. They could thus think of other matters than hunting and eating. With the growth of thought developed the arts and crafts and culture generally. As the population increased, people had to live closer to each other. They were continually meeting each other and having business with each other. If people have to live together they must be considerate to each other. They must avoid doing anything which might hurt their companions or neighbours. Otherwise no social life is possible. Take a family, for instance. A family is a tiny bit of society which will live happily if its members have consideration for each other. This is not very difficult as a rule in a family as there is a bond of affection between its members. Even so it sometimes happens that we forget to be considerate and show that we are not very cultured and civilized after all! In the case of a larger group than the family, it is exactly the same—whether we take our neighbours or our city people or our countrymen or the people of other

countries even. So the growth of population resulted in more social life and more restraint and consideration for others. Culture and civilization are difficult to define and I shall not try to define them. But among the many things that culture includes are certainly restraint over oneself and consideration for others. If a person has not got this restraint over himself and has no consideration for others, one can certainly say that he is uncultured.

14

THE SIXTH CENTURY BEFORE CHRIST AND RELIGION

January 20, 1931

Let us march on the long road of history. We have reached a big milestone, two thousand five hundred years ago, or to put it a little differently, about six hundred years before Christ. Do not think this is an accurate date. I am merely giving you a rough period of time. About this time we find a number of great men, great thinkers, founders of religions in different countries, from China and India to Persia and Greece. They did not live at exactly the same time. But they were near enough to each other in point of time to make this period of the sixth century before Christ a period of great interest. There must have been a wave of thought going through the world, a wave of discontent with existing conditions and of hope and aspiration for something better. For remember that the great founders of religions were always seeking something better and trying to change their people and improve them and lessen their misery. They were always revolutionaries. They were not afraid of attacking existing evils. Where old tradition had gone wrong or where it prevented future growth, they attacked it and removed it without fear. And, above all, they set an example of noble living which for vast numbers of people, generation after generation, became an ideal and an inspiration.

In India, in that sixth century before Christ, we had the Buddha and Mahāvīra; in China, Confucius and Lao-Tse; in Persia, Zarathushtra or Zoroaster[1]; in the

[1] Zarathushtra probably lived in the eighth century B. C.

Greek island of Samos, Pythagoras. You may have heard these names before, though perhaps in different connections. The average school boy or girl thinks of Pythagoras as a busybody who proved a theorem in geometry, which he or she, unhappy person, has to learn now ! This theorem deals with the squares on the sides of a right-angled triangle. Euclid or any other geometry gives it. But, apart from his discoveries in geometry, Pythagoras is supposed to have been a great thinker. We do not know much about him. Some people, indeed, doubt if he ever existed !

Zoroaster of Persia is said to be the founder of Zoroastrianism; but I am not quite sure if it is quite correct to call him the founder. It is better perhaps to say that he gave a new direction and a new push to the old thought and religion of Persia. For a long time past this religion has hardly existed in Persia. The Parsis, who long ago came to India from Persia, brought it with them, and they have practised it ever since.

In China, there were two great men, Confucius and Lao-Tse, during this period. A more correct way of writing Confucius is Kong Fu-Tse. Neither of these two persons were founders of religions in the ordinary sense of the word. They laid down systems of morals and social behaviour, what one should do and what one should not do. But after their deaths numerous temples were built to their memory in China, and their books were as much respected by the Chinese as the Vedas by the Hindus or the Bible by the Christians. And one of the results of the Confucian teaching has been to make the Chinese people the most courteous and perfect-mannered and cultured in the world.

In India there were Mahāvīra and the Buddha. Mahāvīra started the Jain religion as it exists today. His real name was Vardhamana, Mahāvīra being the title of greatness given to him. Jains live largely in western India and in Kathiawad. They have beautiful temples in Kathiawad and in Mount Abu in Rajputana. The Jains today are often included in the Hindus. They

are very great believers in *ahimsa* or non-violence, and are wholly against doing anything which might cause injury to any living being. In this connection, it might interest you to know that Pythagoras was a strict vegetarian. He insisted on his pupils and *chelās* being vegetarians.

We come now to Gautama, the Buddha. He was, as you no doubt know, a Kshattriya, a prince of a royal house. Siddhārtha was his name. His mother was Queen Māyā—"joyously reverenced by all even as the young moon, strong and calm of purpose as the earth, pure of heart as the lotus was Maya, the great Lady," says the old chronicle. His parents tried to bring him up in all comfort and luxury, and even kept him away from all sight of suffering or misery. But this was not possible and, tradition says, that he saw the poor and the suffering and the dead, and he was greatly affected by this sight. There was no peace for him then in his palace, and all the luxury with which he was surrounded, and even his beautiful young wife whom he loved, could not keep his mind away from suffering humanity. And the thought grew in him and the desire to find a remedy for these evils, till he could bear it no longer; and, in the silence of the night, he left his palace and his dear ones, and marched out alone into the wide world to find answers to the questions which troubled him. Long and weary was his search for these answers. At last, many years later, it is said, that sitting under a *peepal* tree in Gaya, enlightenment came to him, and he became the Buddha, the "Enlightened." And the tree under which he had sat came to be known as the Bodhi tree, the Tree of Enlightenment. In the Deer Park at Sarnath, called Isipatana then, under the shadow of ancient Kāshī, Buddha began his teaching. He pointed out the "path of good living." He condemned the sacrifices of all manner of things to the gods, and said we must sacrifice, instead, our anger and hatred and envy and wrong-thinking.

When Buddha was born the old Vedic religion pre-

vailed in India. But already it had changed and fallen from its high estate. The Brahman priests had introduced all manner of rites and *pūjās* and superstition, for the more there is of *pūjā* the more the priests flourish. Caste was becoming harder, and the common people were frightened by omens and spells and witchcraft and quackery. The priests got the people under their control by these methods and challenged the power of the Kshattriya rulers. There was thus rivalry between the Kshattriyas and the Brahmans. Buddha came as a great popular reformer, and he attacked this priestly tyranny and all the evils which had crept into the old Vedic religion. He laid stress on persons living a good life and performing good deeds, and not performing *pūjās* and the like. He organized the Buddhist *Sañgha,* an association of monks and nuns, who followed his teaching.

Buddhism, as a religion, did not spread much in India for some time. Later, we shall see how it spread and how again, in India, it almost ceased to exist as a separate religion. While it triumphed in distant countries from Ceylon to China, in India, the land of its birth, Buddhism was absorbed back into Brahminism or Hinduism. But it exercised a great influence on Brahminism, and rid it of some at least of its superstition and ritual.

Buddhism today is the religion of the greatest number of people in the world. Other religions which have the largest number of followers are Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. There are, besides, the religions of the Hebrews, of the Sikhs, of the Parsis, and others. Religions and their founders have played a great part in the history of the world, and we cannot ignore them in any survey of history. But I find some difficulty in writing about them. There can be no doubt that the founders of the great religions have been among the greatest and noblest men that the world has produced. But their disciples and the people who have come after them have often been far from great or good. Often in history

we see that religion, which was meant to raise us and make us better and nobler, has made people behave like beasts. Instead of bringing enlightenment to them, it has often tried to keep them in the dark. Instead of broadening their minds, it has frequently made them narrow-minded and intolerant of others. In the name of religion many great and fine deeds have been performed. In the name of religion also thousands and millions have been killed, and every crime has been committed.

What then is one to do with religion? For some people religion means the other world: heaven, paradise or whatever it may be called. In the hope of going to heaven they are religious or do certain things. This reminds me of the child who behaves in the hope of being rewarded with a jam puff or *jalebī*! If the child is always thinking of the jam puff or the *jalebī*, you would not say that it has been properly trained, would you? Much less would you approve of boys and girls who did everything for the sake of jam puffs and the like. What then shall we say of grown-up persons who think and act in this way? For, after all, there is no essential difference between the jam puff and the idea of paradise. We are all more or less selfish. But we try to train up our children so that they may become as unselfish as possible. At any rate, our ideals should be wholly unselfish, so that we may try to live up to them.

We all desire to achieve, to see the result of our actions. That is natural. But what do we aim at? Are we concerned with ourselves only or with the larger good—the good of society, of our country, or of humanity? After all, this larger good will include us also. Some days ago, I think, I gave you a Sanskrit verse in one of my letters. This stated that the individual should be sacrificed for the family, the family for the community, and the community for the country. I shall give you the translation of another verse from Sanskrit. This is from the *Bhāgavata*. It runs thus:"I desire not the supreme state of bliss with its eight perfections, nor the cessation of re-birth. May I take up the sorrow of all

creatures who suffer and enter into them so that they may be made free from grief."

One religious man says this, and another says that. And, often enough, each one of them considers the other a fool or a knave. Who is right? And as they talk of things which cannot be seen or proved, it is difficult to settle the argument. But it seems rather presumptuous of both of them to talk with certainty of such matters and to break each other's heads for them. Most of us are narrow-minded and not very wise. Can we presume to imagine that we know all the truth and to force this down the throat of our neighbour? It may be we are right. It may be that our neighbour is also right. If you see a flower on a tree, you do not call it the tree. If another person sees the leaf only, and yet another the trunk, each has seen part of the tree only. How foolish it would be for each one of them to say that the tree was the flower only or the leaf or the trunk, and to fight over this!

I am afraid the next world does not interest me. My mind is full of what I should do in this world, and if I see my way clearly here, I am content. If my duty here is clear to me, I do not trouble myself about any other world.

As you grow up, you will meet all kinds of people, religious people, anti-religious people, and people who do not care either way. There are great churches and religious organizations possessing great wealth and power, sometimes using them for good purposes, sometimes for bad. You will meet very fine and noble people who are religious, and knaves and scoundrels who, under the cloak of religion, rob and defraud others. And you will have to think about these matters and decide for yourself. One can learn much from others, but everything worth while one has to find out or experience oneself. There are some questions which each person has to answer for himself or herself.

Do not be in a hurry to decide. Before you can decide anything big or vital you have to train yourself

and educate yourself to do so. It is right that people should think for themselves and decide for themselves. But they must have the ability to decide. You would not ask a new-born babe to decide anything! And there are many people who, though grown in years, are almost like new-born babes so far as their minds are concerned.

I have written a longer letter than usual today, and you may find it dull. But I wanted to have my little say on this subject. If you do not understand anything now it does not matter. You will understand soon enough.

15

PERSIA AND GREECE

January 21, 1931

Your letter came today and it was good to know that Mummie and you were getting on well. But I wish Dadu would get rid of his fever and his troubles. He has worked so hard all his life and even now he can have no peace and no rest.

So you have read many books from the library and want me to suggest more. But you do not tell me what you have read. It is a good habit to read books, but I rather suspect those who read too many books quickly. I suspect them of not reading them properly at all, of just skimming through them, and forgetting them the day after. If a book is worth reading it is worth reading with some care and thoroughness. But then there are such vast numbers of books which are not worth reading at all, and it is no easy matter to pick and choose good books. You may tell me that if you choose books from our library, they should be good books, or else why should we have got them ? Well, well, read on, and I shall give you such help as I can from Naini Prison. Often I think of the speed with which you are growing in mind and body. How I should like to be with you ! Perhaps you may outgrow these very letters that I am writing to you by the time they reach you. I suppose that Chand[1] will be old enough to read them then, so that anyhow there will be some one to appreciate them.

Let us go back to old Greece and Persia and consider for a while their wars with each other. In one of

[1] Indira's little cousin, Chandralekha Pandit.

our letters we discussed the Greek City States and the great Empire of Persia under a ruler called by the Greeks Darius. This Empire of Darius was a great one not only in extent but also in organization. It extended from Asia Minor to the Indus, and Egypt was part of it, and so also were some Greek cities of Asia Minor. Right across this vast empire ran good roads along which went regularly the imperial post. Darius, for some reason or other, decided to conquer the Greek City States, and during these wars some very famous battles of history took place.

The accounts that we have of these wars were written by a Greek historian named Herodotus, who lived very soon after the events he recorded. He was, of course, partial to the Greeks, but his account is very interesting, and I shall, in the course of these letters, give you some quotations from his history.

The first Persian attack on Greece failed, as the Persian army suffered greatly during its march from disease and lack of food. It did not even reach Greece and had to go back. Then came the second attack in 490 B. C. The Persian army avoided the land route this time and came by sea and landed at a place called Marathon near Athens. The Athenians were greatly alarmed for the fame of the Persian Empire was great. In their fear, the Athenians tried to make up with their old enemies the Spartans and appealed to them for help against the common enemy. But even before the Spartans could reach, the Athenians succeeded in defeating the Persian army. This was at the famous battle of Marathon which took place in 490 B. C.

It seems curious that a small Greek City State could defeat the army of a great empire. But this is not so strange as it might appear. The Greeks were fighting near their home and for their home. The Persian army was far from its homelands. It was a mixed army of soldiers from all parts of the Persian Empire. They fought because they were paid for it. They were not interested very much in the conquest of Greece. The

Athenians, on the other hand, fought for their freedom. They preferred to die rather than lose their freedom, and those who are prepared to die for any cause are seldom defeated.

So Darius was defeated at Marathon. He died in Persia later and was succeeded by Xerxes. Xerxes also had the ambition to conquer Greece, and he fitted out an expedition for this purpose. And here I shall take you to the fascinating story as told by Herodotus. Artabanus was the uncle of Xerxes. He thought there was danger to the Persian army in going to Greece, and he tried to induce his nephew Xerxes not to war against Greece. Herodotus tells us that Xerxes answered him as follows:

> "There is reason in what you say, but you ought not to see danger everywhere or to reckon every risk. If whatever comes up, you are going to weigh everything alike, you will never do anything. It is better to be always an optimist and to suffer half the amount of evil, than always to be full of gloomy anticipations and never suffer anything at all. If you attack every proposal made without showing us the right course to follow, you will come to grief as much as those whom you oppose. The scales are evenly balanced. How can a human being know certainly which way they will incline? He cannot. But success generally attends those who wish to act; and it does not attend those who are timid and balance everything. You see the great power which Persia has attained. If my predecessors on the throne had held your views, or without holding them had had counsellors like you, you would never have seen our kingdom become so great. It is by taking risks that they made us what we are. Great things are achieved through great dangers."

I have given this long quotation because these words of his make us understand the Persian King better than any other account. As it happened, the advice of Artabanus turned out to be correct and the Persian army was defeated in Greece. Xerxes lost, but his words still ring true and contain a lesson for all of us. And today, when we are trying to achieve great things, let us remember that we must pass through great dangers before we can reach our goal.

Xerxes, the King of Kings, took his great army across Asia Minor and crossed to Europe across the Dardanelles, or the Hellespont as it was called in those days. On his way, it is said, Xerxes paid a visit to the ruins of Troy town, where the Greek heroes of old had battled for Helen. A great bridge was put across the Hellespont for the army to cross; and as the Persian army went across, Xerxes surveyed it, seated on a marble throne on top of a hill near by. "And", Herodotus tells us, "seeing all the Hellespont covered over with the ships and all the shores and the plains of Abydos full of men, then Xerxes pronounced himself a happy man, and then he fell to weeping. Artabanus, his uncle, therefore perceiving him—the same who at first boldly declared his opinion advising Xerxes not to march against Hellas—this man, I say, having observed that Xerxes wept, asked as follows: 'O King, how far different from one another are the things which thou hast done now and a short while before now! For having pronounced thyself a happy man, thou art now shedding tears.' He said: 'Yea, for after I had reckoned up, it came to my kind to feel pity at the thought how brief was the whole life of man, seeing that of these multitudes not one will be alive when a hundred years have gone by'."

And so the great army advanced by land, and a multitude of ships accompanied it by sea. But the sea sided with the Greeks and destroyed most of the ships in a great storm. The Hellenes or Greeks were frightened at this great host. They forgot all their quarrels and became united against the invader. They retreated before the Persians and tried to stop them at a place named Thermopylæ. This was a very narrow path with the mountain on the one side and the sea on the other, so that even a few persons could defend it against a host. Here was placed Leonidas with 300 Spartans to defend the Pass to death. Another 1100 Greeks were with him. Right well did these gallant men serve their country on that fateful day, just ten

years after Marathon. They held the host of the Persians while the Greek army retreated. Man after man fell in that narrow pass, and man after man replaced him, and the Persian army could not advance. Leonidas and his 1400 comrades lay dead at Thermopylæ before the Persians could go ahead. In the year 480 B. C. this took place, two thousand four hundred and ten years ago, and even today one's heart thrills to think of this unconquerable courage; even today the traveller to Thermopylæ may see with tear-dimmed eyes, the message, engraved in stone, of Leonidas and his colleagues:

> "Go tell to Sparta, thou that passest by,
> That here obedient to their words we lie."

Wonderful is the courage that conquers death! Leonidas and Thermopylæ live for evermore, and even we in distant India feel a thrill when we think of them. What then shall we say or feel of our own people, our own forbears, men and women of Hindustan, who right through our long history, have smiled and mocked at death, who have preferred death to dishonour or slavery, and who have preferred to break rather than bow down to tyranny ? Think of Chittor and its peerless story, of the amazing heroism of its Rajput men and women! Think also of our present day, of our comrades, warm-blooded like us, who have not flinched at death for India's freedom.

Thermopylæ stopped the Persian army for a while. But not for long. The Greeks retreated before them and some Greek cities even surrendered to them. The proud Athenians, however, preferred to leave their dear city to destruction rather than surrender; and the whole population went away, mostly on the ships. The Persians entered the deserted city and burnt it. The Greek fleet had however not been defeated yet, and a great battle took place near Salamis. The Persian ships were destroyed, and Xerxes, thoroughly disheartened by this disaster, went back to Persia.

Persia remained a great empire for some time longer, but Marathon and Salamis pointed the way to

its decline. Later we shall see how it fell. For those who lived in those days it must have been amazing to see this vast empire totter. Herodotus thought over it and drew a moral from it. He says that a nation's history has three stages: success; then as a consequence of success, arrogance and injustice; then, as a consequence of these, downfall.

16

THE GLORY THAT WAS HELLAS

January 23, 1931

The victories of the Hellenes or Greeks over the Persians had two results. The Persian Empire gradually declined and grew weaker, and the Greeks entered into a brilliant period of their history. This brilliance was short-lived in the life of a nation. It lasted less than two hundred years altogether. It was not a greatness of wide empire, like Persia or the other empires that had gone before. Later the great Alexander arose and for a brief while astonished the world by his conquests. But we are not now dealing with him. We are discussing the period between the Persian wars and the coming of Alexander, a period of about one hundred and fifty years from Thermopylæ and Salamis. The Persian danger had united the Greeks. When this danger was removed, they again fell apart and soon started quarrelling with each other. In particular the City States of Athens and Sparta were bitter rivals. But we shall not trouble ourselves about their quarrels. They have no importance, and we only remember them because of the greatness of Greece in those days in other ways.

We have only a few books, a few statues, a few ruins of those days of Greece. Yet these few are such as to fill us with admiration and to make us wonder at the many sided greatness of the men of Hellas. How rich their minds must have been and how deft their hands to produce their beautiful statuary and their buildings. Phidias was a famous sculptor of those days, but there were many others of renown also. Their plays—tragedies and comedies—are still among the greatest of their kind. Sophocles and Aeschylus and

Euripides and Aristophanes and Pindar and Menander and Sappho and others can only be names for you now. But you will read them when you grow up, I hope, and realize something of the glory that was Greece.

This period of Greek history is a warning to us as to how we should read the history of any country. If we paid attention merely to the petty wars and all the other pettiness that prevailed in the Greek States what would we know of them? If we have to understand them we have to enter into their thought and try to appreciate what they felt and did. It is the inner history that really counts, and it is this that has made modern Europe a child in many ways of the ancient Greek culture.

It is strange and fascinating how in the lives of nations such periods of brilliant life come and go. For a while they brighten up everything and enable the men and women of that period and country to create things of beauty. People seem to become inspired. Our country has had such periods. The earliest of these that we know, was the period which gave birth to the Vedas and the Upanishads and other books. Unfortunately, we have no record of those ancient days and many beautiful and great works may have perished or may still await discovery. But we have enough to show what giants of mind and thought were those Indians of old. In later Indian history we have also such brilliant periods, and perhaps in our wanderings through the ages we may come across them too.

Athens especially has become famous during this period. It had a great statesman for its leader. Pericles was his name, and for thirty years he held power in Athens. During this period Athens became a noble city, full of beautiful buildings and great artists and great thinkers. Even now it is spoken of as the Athens of Pericles and we talk of the Age of Pericles.

Our friend Herodotus, the historian, who lived about this time in Athens, thought about this growth

of Athens and, as he was fond of moralizing, he drew a moral from it. He says in his history that:

> "The power of Athens grew; and here is evidence—and there is proof of it everywhere—that liberty is a good thing. While the Athenians were despotically governed, they were not superior in war to any of their neighbours, but when they got rid of their despot, they far surpassed them. This shows that in subjection they did not exert themselves, but they were working for a master, but when they became free each individual keenly did his best on his own account."

I have mentioned some names of the great ones of those times. One of the greatest of that, or any time, I have not yet mentioned. His name was Socrates. He was a philosopher, always searching for truth. To him the only thing worth having was true knowledge, and he often discussed difficult questions with his friends and acquaintances, so that out of the discussions truth might come out. He had many disciples or *chelās* and the greatest of these was Plato. Plato wrote many books which have come down to us. It is from these books that we know a great deal of his master, Socrates. Evidently governments do not like people who are always trying to find out things; they do not like the search for truth. The Athenian Government—this was just after the time of Pericles—did not like the methods of Socrates and they held a trial and condemned him to death. They told him that if he promised to give up his discussions with people and changed his ways they would let him off. But he refused to do so and preferred the cup of poison, which brought him death, to giving up what he considered his duty. On the point of death almost he addressed his accusers and judges, the Athenians, and said:

> "If you propose to acquit me on condition that I abandon my search for truth, I will say: I thank you, O Athenians, but I will obey God, who as I believe set me this task, rather than you, and so long as I have breath and strength I will never cease from my occupation with philosophy. I will continue the practice of accosting whomever I meet and saying to him, 'Are you not

> ashamed of setting your heart on wealth and honours while you have no care for wisdom and truth and making your soul better?' I know not what death is—it may be a good thing, and I am not afraid of it. But I do know that it is a bad thing to desert one's post and I prefer what may be good to what I know to be bad."

In life Socrates served the cause of truth and knowledge well, but better still he served it in his death.

In these days you will often read or hear discussions and arguments on many problems, on Socialism and Capitalism and many other things. There is a great deal of suffering and injustice in the world and many people are thoroughly dissatisfied with it, and they seek to change it. Plato also thought of problems of government, and he has written about them. Thus even in those days people were thinking of how to shape the government of a country and society so that there may be greater happiness all round.

When Plato was getting old, another Greek who has become famous, was coming to the front. His name was Aristotle. He had been the private tutor of Alexander the Great, and Alexander helped him greatly with his work. Aristotle did not trouble himself with problems of philosophy like Socrates and Plato. He was more interested in observing things in nature and in understanding the ways of nature. This is called Natural Philosophy or, more often now, Science. So Aristotle was one of the early scientists.

We must now go on to Aristotle's pupil, the great Alexander, and follow his swift career. But that must be tomorrow. I have written enough for today.

Today is *Vasanṭa Pañchamī*, the coming of spring. The all-too-short winter is past and the air has lost its keenness. More and more birds come to us and fill the day with their songs. And today, just fifteen years ago, in Delhi city, your Mummie and I got married to each other!

17

A FAMOUS CONQUEROR BUT A CONCEITED YOUNG MAN

January 24, 1931

In my last letter, and even before that, I have referred to Alexander the Great. I think I have called him a Greek. It is not quite correct to say so. He was really a Macedonian, that is, he came from a country just north of Greece. The Macedonians were in many ways like the Greeks; you might call them their cousins. Philip, the father of Alexander, was King of Macedonia. He was an able king and he made his little kingdom strong, and built up a very efficient army. Alexander is called "the Great", and he is very famous in history. But a great deal of what he did was done because of the careful work of his father Philip before him. Whether Alexander was a really great man or not is a doubtful matter. He is certainly no hero of mine. But he succeeded in a short life in impressing his name on two continents, and in history he is supposed to be the first of the world-conquerors. Far away in the heart of Central Asia, he is still remembered as Sikandar, and whatever he may have been in reality, history has succeeded in attaching a glamour to his name. Scores of cities have been named after him and many of these still continue. The greatest of these was Alexandria, in Egypt.

He was only twenty when he became king. Full of ambition to achieve greatness, he was eager to march towards the old enemy, Persia, with the fine army which his father had made for him. The Greeks did not like Philip or Alexander, but they were cowed down a little by their strength. And so they acknowledged them,

one after the other, as the captain-general of all the Greek forces which were to invade Persia. Thus they bowed down to the new power that was rising. One Greek city, Thebes, rebelled against him and he struck at it with great cruelty and violence. He destroyed this famous city and knocked down its buildings and massacred many of its people and sold many thousands into slavery. By this barbarous behaviour he terrified Greece. But this and other instances of barbarism in his life do not make him admirable for us. They repel and disgust us.

Egypt, which was then under the Persian King, was easily conquered by Alexander. He had already defeated the Persian King Darius III, a successor of Xerxes. Again, he went towards Persia and defeated Darius a second time. The great palace of Darius, the King of Kings, was destroyed by Alexander, in revenge, he said, for the burning of Athens by Xerxes.

There is an old book in the Persian language, written nearly a thousand years ago, by a poet named Firdausi. The book is called the *Shāhnāmah;* it is a chronicle of the Kings of Persia. This book describes, very fancifully, the battles of Alexander and Darius. It tells us that on being defeated Darius sought help from India. "A camel with the pace of wind he sent" to Fūr or Porus, who was a king in the north-west of India. But Porus could not help him at all. He himself had to face the onslaught of Alexander soon after. In this book, the *Shāhnāmah* of Firdausi, it is interesting to find numerous references to Indian swords and daggers being used by the Persian King and nobles. This indicates that even in Alexander's day India was making swords of fine steel, which were welcomed in foreign countries.

Alexander wandered on from Persia. Through the country where Herat and Kabul and Samarqand now stand he went and reached the upper valleys of the river Indus. Here he met the first Indian ruler who opposed him. Greek historians call him Porus after the Greek

fashion. His real name must have been similar to this but we do not know it. It is said that Porus fought bravely and it was not easy for Alexander to overcome him. Very chivalrous and very tall, Porus is said to have been, and Alexander was so impressed by his courage and chivalry that, even after defeating him, he left him in charge of his kingdom. But from being King Porus he became a *satrap*, or governor, of the Greeks.

Alexander entered India through the Khyber Pass in the north-west, and *via* Taxila, which lies a little north of Rawalpindi. Even now you can see the ruins of this ancient city. After defeating Porus, Alexander appears to have considered marching south towards the Ganges. But he did not do so and following the Indus valley he returned. It is interesting to think what might have happened if Alexander had marched towards the heart of Hindustan. Would he have continued to win? Or, would the Indian armies have overcome him? A frontier king like Porus gave him sufficient trouble, and it is quite possible that the bigger kingdoms of Middle India may have been strong enough to check Alexander. But whatever Alexander may or may not have wished, his army decided for him. They were tired and weary of many years' wanderings. Perhaps they were impressed by the fighting qualities of the Indian soldiers and did not wish to take the risk of a defeat. Whatever the reason was, the army insisted on going back and Alexander had to agree. The return journey was however a disastrous one and the army suffered from lack of food and water. Soon after, in 323 B. C., Alexander died at Babylon. He never saw his home country Macedonia again after he set out for his Persian campaign.

So died Alexander at the age of 33. What had this 'great' person done during his brief career? He won some brilliant battles. He was undoubtedly a great general. But he was vain and conceited and sometimes very cruel and violent. He thought of himself almost as a god. In fits of anger or whims of the moment he killed some of his best friends, and destroyed great cities

with their inhabitants. He left nothing solid behind him in his empire—not even proper roads—that he had built. Like a meteor in the sky he came and went and left little of himself behind him except a memory. His family people killed each other off after his death, and his great empire fell to pieces. A world-conqueror he is called, and it is said that once he sat down and wept because there was nothing more left for him to conquer! But India, except for a little bit in the north-west, was still unconquered by him; and China even then was a great State, and Alexander went nowhere near China.

On his death his empire was divided up between his generals. Egypt fell to Ptolemy who established a strong government there and a dynasty. Under this government, with Alexandria as its capital, Egypt was a powerful country. Alexandria became a great city famous for its science and philosophy and learning.

Persia and Mesopotamia and part of Asia Minor fell to the lot of another general, Seleucus. To his share fell also the part of the north-west India which Alexander had conquered. But he was unable to keep any part of India, and the Greek garrison was driven out from there after Alexander's death.

Alexander came to India in 326 B. C. His coming was just a raid and it made very little difference to India. Some people think that this raid helped to begin intercourse between the Indians and the Greeks. But, as a matter of fact, even before Alexander's day there was a highway between the East and the West, and India was in continual touch with Persia and even Greece. This contact must, of course, have been increased by Alexander's visit, and the two cultures—the Indian and the Greek—must have mixed to a greater extent. The very word 'India' comes through the Greek 'Indos', from the river Indus.

Alexander's raid and his death led, in India, to the founding of a great empire, the Maurya Empire. This was one of the great periods in Indian history and we must spend some little time over it.

18

CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA AND THE ARTHASHASTRA

January 25, 1931

In one of our letters I mentioned Magadha. This was an old kingdom, situated where the province of Bihar now lies. The capital of this kingdom was Pātaliputra, the modern Patna. About the time we are now considering, a line of kings belonging to the Nanda dynasty or family ruled over Magadha. When Alexander came on his raid to the north-west of India, a Nanda king ruled at Pātaliputra. Probably related to this king, there was a young man there named Chandragupta. Chandragupta appears to have been a very clever, energetic and ambitious person, and the Nanda king thinking him too clever, or not liking something that he had done, exiled him from his country. Chandragupta went north to Taxila, attracted perhaps by stories of Alexander and the Greeks. With him was a very able Brahman named Vishnugupta, also called Chānakya. The two of them, Chandragupta and Chānakya, were not meek and mild persons bowing down to fate or whatever might happen to them. They had great and ambitious schemes in their heads and they wanted to go ahead and succeed. Perhaps Chandragupta was dazzled and attracted by the glory of Alexander and wanted to follow his example. In Chānakya he had an ideal friend and counsellor for this purpose. Both kept their eyes open and watched carefully what was happening in Taxila. They bided their time.

Soon their opportunity came. As soon as news of Alexander's death reached Taxila, Chandragupta knew

that the time had come for action. He roused up the people round about and, with their help, he attacked and drove away the Greek garrison that Alexander had left. Having taken possession of Taxila, Chandragupta and his allies marched south to Pātaliputra and defeated the Nanda king. This was in 321 B. C., just five years after Alexander's death; and from this date begins the reign of the Maurya dynasty. It is not quite clear why Chandragupta was called Maurya. Some people think that this was due to his mother's name being Mura; others say that his mother's father was the keeper of the king's peacocks, and a peacock is called *mayūra* in Sanskrit. Whatever the origin of the word may have been, Chandragupta Maurya is the name he is known by, to distinguish him from another great Chandragupta, who was a great ruler in India many hundreds of years later.

The Mahābhārata and other old books and old stories tell us of great kings—Chakravartī rajas—who ruled over the whole of Bhārata. But we have no clear knowledge of those days and cannot even say what was the extent of Bhārata or Bhāratavarsha in those days. It may be that the stories coming down to us exaggerate the might of the old rulers. However that may be, the first instance that we find in history of a strong and wide-spread empire in India is that of Chandragupta Maurya. As we shall see, this was a very advanced and powerful government. It is clear that such a government and State could not have come into existence suddenly. For a long time past there must have been various processes going on—processes of amalgamation of the smaller kingdoms and of advancement in the art of government.

During Chandragupta's reign Seleukos, the general of Alexander who had inherited the countries from Asia Minor to India, crossed the Indus with an army and invaded India. He repented very soon of his rashness. Chandragupta defeated him badly and Seleukos went back the way he came. Instead of gaining anything he had to give up a good part of Gandhara, or Afghanistan,

upto Kabul and Herat, to Chandragupta. Chandragupta also married the daughter of Seleukos. His empire now covered the whole of north India and part of Afghanistan, from Kabul to Bengal, and from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal. Only South India was not under him. Pātaliputra was the capital of this great empire.

Seleukos sent an ambassador named Magasthenes to represent him at the court of Chandragupta. Magasthenes has left us an interesting account of those days. But we have another and a more interesting account which gives us full details of the government of Chandragupta. This is Kautilya's *Arthashāstra*. Kautilya is none other than our old friend Chānakya or Vishnugupta, and *Arthashāstra* means " the science of wealth."

This book, the *Arthashāstra*, deals with so many subjects and discusses such a variety of matters that it is not possible for me to tell you much about it. It deals with the duties of the king, of his ministers and counsellors, of council meetings, of departments of government, of trade and commerce, of the government of towns and villages, of law and law courts, of social customs, of the rights of women, of maintenance of the old and helpless, of marriage and divorce, of taxation, of the army and navy, of war and peace, of diplomacy, of agriculture, of spinning and weaving, of artisans, of passports, and even of jails! I could go on adding to this list, but I do not want to fill this letter with the chapter heads of Kautilya.

The king, on receiving the royal authority from the people's hands at the time of the coronation, had to take an oath of service of the people. " May I ", he had to affirm, "May I be deprived of heaven, of life, and of offspring if I oppress you". The king's daily work and routine is given. He had to be ready always for urgent work, for public work could not suffer or await a king's pleasure. "If a king is energetic, his subjects will be equally energetic." "In the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness, in their welfare his welfare, whatever

pleases himself he shall consider as not good, but whatever pleases his subjects, he shall consider as good." Kings are disappearing from this world of ours. There are very few left and they too will go soon enough. It is interesting however to see that the idea of kingship in ancient India meant service of the people. Their was no divine right of kings, no autocratic power. And if the king misbehaved, his people had the right to remove him and put another in his place. This was the idea and the theory. Of course, there were many kings who fell short of this ideal and who brought misfortune to their country and people by their folly.

The *Arthashāstra* also lays stress on the old doctrine that "never shall an *Ārya* be subjected to slavery". Apparently there were some kind of slaves, brought from outside the country or belonging to the country, but so far as the *Āryas* were concerned, care was taken that they should never become slaves.

The capital city of the Maurya Empire was Pātaliputra. This was a magnificent city with a nine-mile front along the Ganges river. There were sixty-four main gates and hundreds of smaller ones. The houses were chiefly made of wood, and as there was danger of fire elaborate precautions were taken to prevent it. The principal streets had thousands of vessels always kept filled with water. Each householder was also made to keep vessels of water ready for use in case of fire, and also ladders, hooks and other articles that may be necessary.

One rule for the cities, given in Kautilya, will interest you. Whoever threw dirt in the street was punished with a fine. If anyone allowed mud or water to collect in the street, he was also fined. If these rules were enforced, Pātaliputra and the other cities must have been fine and clean and sanitary. I wish some such rules could be introduced by our municipalities!

Pātaliputra had a municipal council to manage its affairs. This was elected by the people. It had thirty members, there being six committees of five members

each. These committees dealt with the industries, and handicrafts of the city, arrangements for travellers and pilgrims, deaths and births for taxation purposes, manufactures and other matters. The whole council looked after sanitation, finance, water-supply, gardens and public buildings.

There were *panchāyats* for administering justice and courts of appeal. Special measures were taken for famine relief. Half the stores in all the State warehouses were always kept in reserve for times of famine.

Such was the Maurya Empire as organized by Chandragupta and Chānakya twenty-two hundred years ago. I have just mentioned some of the matters mentioned by Kautilya and Magasthenes. Even these will give you a rough idea of North India in those days. The country must have hummed with life from the capital city of Pātaliputra to the many other great cities and the thousands of towns and villages of the empire. Great roads led from one part of the empire to the other. The principal *Rājapattra*, the King's Way, passed through Pātaliputra to the north-west frontier. There were many canals and a special irrigation department to look after them; and a navigation department for the harbours, ferries, bridges, and the numerous boats and ships that plied from one place to another. Ships went across the seas to Burma and China.

Over this empire Chandragupta ruled for 24 years. He died in B. C. 296. We shall carry on the story of the Mauryan Empire in our next letter.

19

THREE MONTHS!

S. S. Cracovia
April 21, 1931

It is long since I wrote to you. Nearly three months have gone by, three months of sorrow and difficulty and strain. Three months of change in India, and change above all in our family circle. India has stopped for a while the campaign of *Satyagraha*, or Civil Disobedience, but the problems that face us are not easier of solution; and our family has lost its dearly-loved head, who gave us strength and inspiration, and under whose sheltering care we grew up and learnt to do our bit for India, our common mother.

How well I remember that day in Naini Prison. It was the 26th of January and I sat down, as was my usual practice, to write to you about the days that have gone by. Only the day before I had written about Chandragupta and of the Mauryan Empire which he founded. And I had promised to carry on the story and to tell you of those who followed Chandragupta Maurya, of Ashoka the Great, beloved of the gods, who shone like a bright star in the Indian sky and passed away, leaving a deathless memory. As I thought of Ashoka, my mind wandered and came back to the present, to the 26th of January, the day I sat with pen and paper to write to you. That day was a great day for us, for a year ago that very day we had celebrated all over India, in city and in village, as Independence Day, *Pūrna Swarāj* day, and all of us in our millions had taken the pledge of Independence. Since then a year had passed by, a year of struggle and suffering and triumph, and again India was going to celebrate that great day. And as I sat in barrack No. 6 of

Naini Prison, I thought of the meetings and processions and the *lathi* charges and arrests that would take place that day all over the country. I thought of this with pride and joy and anguish, when suddenly my musing was cut short. A message was brought to me from the outside world that Dadu was very ill and I was to be released immediately to go to him. Full of anxiety, I forgot my musings, and put away the letter to you I had just begun, and left Naini Jail for Anand Bhawan.

Ten days I was with Dadu before he left us. Ten days and nights we watched his suffering and agony and his brave fight with the Angel of Death. Many a fight had he fought during his life, and many a victory won. He did not know how to surrender, and even face to face with Death, he would not give in. As I watched this last struggle of his, full of anguish at my inability to help him whom I loved so much, I thought of some lines which I had read long ago in a tale of Edgar Allan Poe: "Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor even unto death utterly, save by the weakness of his feeble will".

It was on the 6th of February, in the early morning, that he left us. We brought his body wrapped in the Flag he loved so well, from Lucknow to Anand Bhawan. Within a few hours it was reduced to a handful of ashes and the Ganga carried this precious burden to the sea.

Millions have sorrowed for him, but what of us, children of his, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone! And what of the new Anand Bhawan, child of his also, even as we are, fashioned by him so lovingly and carefully. It is lonely and deserted and its spirit seems to have gone; and we walk along its verandahs with light steps, lest we disturb, thinking ever of him who made it.

We sorrow for him and miss him at every step. And as the days go by the sorrow does not seem to grow less or his absence more tolerable. But then I think that he would not have us so. He would not like us to give

in to grief, but to face it, as he faced his troubles, and conquer it. He would like us to go on with the work he left unfinished. How can we rest or give in to futile grief when work beckons and the cause of India's freedom demands our service? For that cause he died. For that cause we will live and strive and, if necessary, die. After all, we are his children and have something of his fire and strength and determination in us.

The deep blue Arabian Sea stretches out before me as I write; and on the other side, in the far distance, is the coast of India, passing by. I think of this vast and almost immeasurable expanse and compare it to the little barrack, with its high walls, in Naini Prison, from where I wrote to you my previous letters. The sharp outline of the horizon stands out before me, where the sea seems to meet the sky; but in jail, a prisoner's horizon is the top of the wall surrounding him. Many of us who were in prison are out of it today and can breathe the freer air outside. But many of our colleagues remain still in their narrow cells deprived of the sight of the sea and the land and the horizon. And India herself is still in prison and her freedom is yet to come. What is our freedom worth if India is not free?

20

THE ARABIAN SEA

S. S. *Cracovia*
April 22, 1931

Strange that we should be travelling by this boat—the *Cracovia*—from Bombay to Colombo! I remember well waiting for the *Cracovia* to arrive in Venice nearly four years ago. Dadu was on board, and I had gone to Venice to meet him leaving you at your school at Bex in Switzerland. Again, some months later, it was by the *Cracovia* that Dadu returned home from Europe and I met him in Bombay. Some of his fellow-passengers of that voyage are with us now and they are full of stories of him.

I wrote to you yesterday of the past three months of change. One thing that took place during these last few weeks I would have you remember, as India will remember it for long years to come. Less than a month ago in Cawnpore city died a gallant soldier of India, Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, done to death even as he sought to save others. Ganeshji was a dear friend of mine, a noble and selfless comrade with whom it was a privilege to work. When madness broke out in Cawnpore last month and Indian killed Indian, Ganeshji rushed out into the fray, not to fight any one of his countrymen but to save them. He saved hundreds, himself he could not save, and did not care to save, and by the hands of the very people he sought to save, he met his death. Cawnpore and our province have lost a bright star and many of us a dear and wise friend. But what a glorious death was his, as he faced calm-eyed and without flinching the madness of the mob, and even in the midst of

danger and death thought only of others and how to save them!

Three months of change! A drop in the ocean of time, a bare second in the life of a nation! Only three weeks ago I went to see the ruins of Mohen-jo Daro in the Indus valley in Sind. You were not with me there. I saw a great city coming out of the earth, a city of solid brick houses and wide thoroughfares, built, they say, five thousand years ago. And I saw beautiful jewellery and jars found in this ancient city. I could almost imagine men and women, decked out in gay attire, walking up and down its streets and lanes, and children playing, as children will, and the bazaars, bright with merchandise, and people buying and selling, and the temple bells ringing.

For these five thousand years India has lived her life and seen many a change. And I sometimes wonder if this old mother of ours, so ancient and yet so young and beautiful, does not smile at the impatience of her children and their petty worries and their joys and sorrows which last for a day and then are no more!

21

A HOLIDAY AND A DREAM JOURNEY

March 26, 1932

Fourteen months have passed by since I wrote to you from Naini Prison about past history. Three months later, I added two short letters to that series from the Arabian Sea. We were on board the *Cracovia* then, hurrying to Lankā. As I wrote, the great big sea stretched out before me and my hungry eyes gazed at it and could not take their fill. Then came Lankā, and for a month we made glorious holiday and tried to forget our troubles and worries. Up and down that most beautiful of islands we went, wondering at its exceeding loveliness and at the abundance of nature. Kandy and Nuwara Eliya and Anuradhapura, with its ruins and relics of old greatness; how pleasant it is to think of the many places we visited. But, above all, I love to think of the cool tropical jungle with its abundant life, looking at you with a thousand eyes; and of the graceful areca tree, slender and straight and true; and the innumerable coconuts; and the palm-fringed sea-shore where the emerald green of the island meets the blue of the sea and the sky; and the sea water glistens and plays on the surf, and the wind rustles through the palm leaves.

It was your first visit to the tropics, and for me also, but for a brief stay long ago, the memory of which had almost faded, it was a new experience. I was not attracted to them. I feared the heat. It was the sea and the mountain, and above all the high snows and glaciers, that fascinated me. But even during our short stay in Ceylon I felt something of the charm and the witchery of the tropics, and I came back, some-

what wistfully, hoping to make friends with them again.

Our month of holiday in Ceylon ended too soon, and we crossed the narrow seas to the southern tip of India. Do you remember our visit to Kanyā-Kumāri, where the Virgin Goddess is said to dwell and keep guard, and which Westerners, with their genius for twisting and corrupting our names, have called Cape Comorin? We sat, literally, at the feet of mother India then, and we saw the Arabian Sea meet the waters of the Bay of Bengal, and we liked to imagine that they were both paying homage to India! Wonderfully peaceful it was there, and my mind travelled several thousand miles to the other extremity of India where the eternal snows crown the Himalayas and peace also dwells. But between the two there is strife enough and misery and poverty!

We left the Cape and journeyed northwards.

Through Travancore and Cochin we went, and over the backwaters of Malabar—how beautiful they were, and how our boat glided along in the moon-light between the wooded banks, almost as if in a dream. Then we passed on to Mysore and Hyderabad and Bombay and, at last, to Allahabad. That was nine months ago, in the month of June.

But all roads in India in these days sooner or later lead to one destination; all journeys, dream ones or real, end in prison! And so here I am back again behind my old familiar walls, with plenty of time to think or write to you, though my letters may not reach you. Again the fight is on and our people, men and women, boys and girls, go forth to battle for freedom and to rid this country of the curse of poverty. But freedom is a goddess hard to win; she demands, as of old, human sacrifice from her votaries.

I complete three months today. It was on this very day three months ago—December 26—that I was arrested for the sixth time. I have taken long in resuming these letters to you, but you know how diffi-

cult it is sometimes to think of the distant past when the present fills the mind. It takes some little time for me to settle down in gaol and to avoid worrying about happenings outside. I shall try to write to you regularly. But I am in a different prison now and the change is not to my liking and interferes a little with my work. My horizon is higher than ever here. The wall which faces me must bear some relation, in height at least, to the Great Wall of China! It seems to be about twenty-five feet high, and the sun takes an extra hour and a half to climb over it every morning before it can visit us.

Our horizon may be limited for a while. But it is good to think of the great blue sea and the mountains and the deserts, and of the dream journey we took—it hardly seems real now—you and Mummie and I, ten months ago.

22

MAN'S STRUGGLE FOR A LIVING

March 28, 1932

Let us pick up again the threads of world-history and try to have some glimpses into the past. It is a tangled web, difficult to unravel and difficult even to see as a whole. We are so apt to lose ourselves in a particular bit of it and give it more importance than it deserves. Nearly all of us think that the history of our own country, whichever that might be, is more glorious and more worthy of study than the histories of other countries. I have warned you against this once before and I shall warn you again. It is so easy to fall into the trap. It was indeed to prevent this happening that I began writing these letters to you, and yet, sometimes, I have felt that I am making this very mistake. What am I to do if my own education was defective and the history I was taught was topsy-turvy? I have tried to make amends for it by further study in the seclusion of prison, and perhaps I have succeeded to some extent. But I cannot remove from the gallery of my mind the pictures of persons and events which I hung there in my boyhood and youth. And these pictures colour my outlook on history, which is sufficiently limited as it is by incomplete knowledge. I shall make mistakes, therefore, in what I write; and many an unimportant fact I shall mention, and many an important one forget to write about. But these letters are not meant to take the place of books of history. They are, or at least I please myself by imagining them to be, little talks *entre nous*, which we might have had if a thousand miles and many solid walls did not separate us.

I cannot help writing to you about many famous men who fill the pages of history books. They are often interesting in their own way, and they help us to understand the time they lived in. But history is not just a record of the doings of big men, of kings and emperors and the like. If so, history might as well shut up shop now; for kings and emperors have almost ceased to strut about the world's stage. But the really great men and women do not, of course, require thrones or crowns or jewels or titles to show them off. It is only the kings and the princelets, who have nothing in them but their kingships and princedoms, who have to put on their liveries and uniforms to hide the nakedness underneath. And unhappily many of us are taken in and deluded by this outward show and make the mistake of

"Calling a crowned man royal
That was no more than a king."

Real history should deal, not with a few individuals here and there, but with the people who make up a nation, who work and by their labour produce the necessaries and luxuries of life, and who in a thousand different ways act and react on each other. Such a history of man would really be a fascinating story. It would be the story of man's struggle back through the ages against the elements and nature, against wild beasts and the jungle and, last and most difficult of all, against some of his own kind who have tried to keep him down and to exploit him for their own benefit. It is the story of man's struggle for a living. And because, in order to live, certain things, like food and shelter and clothing in cold climates, are necessary, those who have controlled these necessities have lorded it over man. The rulers and the bosses have had authority because they owned or controlled some essential of livelihood. This control gave them the power to starve people into submission. And so we see the strange sight of large masses being exploited by the comparatively few; of many who earn without working

at all, and of vast numbers who work but earn very little.

The savage, hunting alone, gradually forms a family; and the whole household work together and for each other. Many households co-operate together to form the village, and workers and merchants and artisans of different villages later join together to form guilds of craftsmen. Gradually you see the social unit growing. To begin with, it was the individual, the savage. There was no society of any kind. The family was the next bigger unit, and then the village and the group of villages. Why did this social unit grow? It was the struggle for a living that forced growth and co-operation. Co-operation in defence against the common enemy and in attack was obviously far more effective than single-handed defence or attack. Even more so was co-operation in work helpful. By working together they could produce far more food and other necessaries than by working singly. This co-operation in work meant that the economic unit was also growing, from the individual savage, who hunted for himself, to large groups. Indeed, it was probably this growth of the economic unit, ever pushed on by man's struggle for a living, that resulted in the growth of society and of the social unit. Right through the long stretches of history we see this growth in the midst of almost interminable conflict and misery and sometimes even a relapse. But do not imagine that this growth means necessarily that the world has progressed greatly or is a far happier place than it was. Perhaps it is better than it was; but it is very far from perfection, and there is misery enough everywhere.

Life becomes more and more complicated as these economic and social units grow. Commerce and trade increase. Barter takes the place of gift, and then money comes and makes a tremendous difference to all transactions. Immediately trade goes ahead, for payment by gold or silver coin makes an exchange easy. Later, even coin is not always used. People use sym-

bols. A piece of paper with a promise to pay is considered good enough. Thus come into use bank notes and cheques. This means doing business on credit. The use of credit again helps trade and commerce greatly. As you know cheques and bank notes are frequently used nowadays. Sensible people do not carry about bags of gold and silver with them.

Thus we see, as history progresses out of the dim past, people producing more and more and people specializing in different trades. We see them exchanging their goods with each other and in this way increasing trade. We see also new and better means of communication developing, especially during the last hundred years or so when the steam engine came. As production grows the wealth of the world increases, and some people at least have more leisure. And so what is called civilization develops.

But all this happens, and people boast of our enlightened and progressive age, and of the wonders of our modern civilization and of our great culture and science; and yet the poor remain poor and miserable, and great nations fight each other and slaughter millions; and great countries like our own are ruled by an alien people. What is the good of civilization to us if we cannot even have freedom in our own households? But we are up and doing.

How fortunate we are to live in these stirring times, when each one of us can take part in the great adventure and see not only India but the whole world in process of change. You are a lucky girl. Born in the month and year of the great revolution which ushered in a new era in Russia, you are now witness to a revolution in your own country and soon you may be an actor in it. All over the world there is trouble and change. In the Far East, Japan is at the throat of China; in the West, and indeed all over the world, the old system totters and threatens to collapse. Countries talk of disarmament, but look suspiciously at each other and keep armed to the teeth. It is the twilight

of Capitalism, which has lorded it for so long over the world. And when it goes, as go it must, it will take many an evil thing with it.

23

A SURVEY

March 29, 1932

How far have we reached in our journey through the ages? We have talked a little already of the old days in Egypt and India and China and Knossos. We have seen the ancient and wonderful civilization of Egypt, which produced the pyramids, gradually decay and lose its strength and become an empty shadow, a thing of forms and symbols, with little of real life in it. We have seen Knossos destroyed by the sister race from the Grecian mainland. In India and China we have glanced at the dim and distant beginnings, unable for want of material to know much, but conscious of their rich civilization even in those days; and wondering at the unbroken links which join the two countries culturally to their respective pasts, many thousands of years ago. In Mesopotamia we have had just a glimpse of empire after empire flourishing for a while, and then going the way of all empires.

We have also said something of a number of great thinkers who appeared in different countries about five or six hundred years before Christ. Buddha and Mahavira in India; Confucius and Lao-Tse in China; Zoroaster in Persia; and Pythagoras in Greece. We noticed that Buddha attacked priestcraft and the existing forms of the old Vedic religion in India; for he found that the masses were being imposed upon and deluded by all manner of superstition and *pūjās*. He attacked the caste system and preached equality.

We went back then to the west, where Asia and Europe join each other, and followed the fortunes of Persia and Greece—how a great empire rose in Persia

and Darius the "King of kings" extended it right up to Sindh in India; how this empire tried to swallow up little Greece but found to its great amazement that the little thing could kick back and hold its own. Then followed the short but brilliant period of Greek history of which I have told you something, when a host of geniuses and great men lived there and produced literature and art of the highest beauty.

The golden age of Greece did not last long. Alexander of Macedon spread the fame of Greece far and wide by his conquests, but with his coming the high culture of Greece gradually faded. Alexander destroyed the Persian Empire and even crossed the borders of India as a conqueror. He was undoubtedly a great general, but tradition has woven innumerable legends round his name and he has acquired a fame which he hardly deserves. Only the well-read know anything of Socrates or Plato or Phidias or Sophocles or the other great men of Greece. But who has not heard of Alexander? In the remotest corner of Central Asia his name survives as Sikandar. Many a city still bears his name.

Alexander did comparatively little. The Persian Empire was old and tottering and was hardly likely to survive for long. In India Alexander's visit was just a raid and had little significance. Perhaps if Alexander had lived longer he might have done something more substantial. But he died young, and his empire fell to pieces immediately. His empire did not last, but his name endures.

One great effect of Alexander's march to the east was the fresh contacts established between East and West. Large numbers of Greeks went east and settled down in the old cities or in new colonies which they established. Even before Alexander there was contact and trade between East and West. But after him this increased greatly.

Another possible effect of Alexander's invasions was, if true, very unfortunate for the Greeks. A

theory has been advanced that his soldiers brought back with them the malaria mosquito from the swamps of Mesopotamia to the Greek lowlands; and thus malaria spread and weakened and enfeebled the Greek race. This is one of the explanations given of the decline of the Greeks. But it is just a theory and no one knows how much truth it contains.

Alexander's brief-lived empire came to an end. But in its place arose several smaller empires. Among these was that of Egypt under Ptolemy and that of western Asia under Seleucus. Both Ptolemy and Seleucus were Alexander's generals. Seleucus tried to encroach on India but he found to his dismay that India could hit back with vigour. Chandragupta Maurya had established a powerful state all over north and central India. Of Chandragupta and his famous Brahman minister Chanakya and the book he wrote—the *Arthashāstra*—I have already, in my old letters, told you something. Fortunately for us, this book gives us a good picture of those times in India over two thousand two hundred years ago.

We have completed our look back and we shall go ahead with the story of the Mauryan Empire and of Ashoka in the next letter. I promised indeed to do so over 14 months ago, on January 25, 1931, in Naini Prison. I have still to keep this promise.

24

ASHOKA, THE BELOVED OF THE GODS

March 30, 1932

I am afraid I am a little too fond of running down kings and princes. I see little in their kind to admire or do reverence to. But we are now coming to a person, who in spite of being a king and emperor, was great and worthy of admiration. He was Ashoka, the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya. Speaking of him in his *Outline of History* H. G. Wells (some of whose romances you must have read) says: "Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, their majesties and graciousnesses and serenities and royal highnesses and the like, the name of Ashoka shines, and shines almost alone, a star From the Volga to Japan his name is still honoured. China, Tibet, and even India, though it has left his doctrine, preserve the tradition of his greatness. More living men cherish his memory today than have ever heard the names of Constantine or Charlemagne."

This is high praise indeed. But it is deserved, and for an Indian it is an especial pleasure to think of this period of India's history.

Chandragupta died nearly three hundred years before the Christian era began. He was succeeded by his son Bindusāra, who seems to have had a quiet reign of 25 years. He kept up contacts with the Greek world, and ambassadors came to his court from Ptolemy of Egypt, and Antiochus, who was the son of Seleucus of western Asia. There was trade with the outside world and, it is said, the Egyptians used to dye their cloth with indigo from India. It is also stated that they wrapped their mummies in Indian muslins. Some old remains

have been discovered in Behar which seem to show that some kind of glass was made there even before the Maurya period.

It will interest you to know that Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador who came to the court of Chandragupta, writes about the Indian love of finery and beauty, and specially notes the use of the shoe to add to one's height! So high heels are not entirely a modern invention.

Ashoka succeeded Bindusāra in 268 B.C. to a great empire, which included the whole of north and central India and went right up to Central Asia. With the desire perhaps of bringing into his empire the remaining parts in the south-east and south, he started the conquest of Kalinga in the 9th year of his reign. Kalinga lay on the east coast of India, between the Mahanadi, Godāvari and Kistna rivers. The people of Kalinga fought bravely, but they were ultimately subdued after terrible slaughter. This war and slaughter deeply affected Ashoka. He was disgusted with war and all its works. Henceforth there was to be no war for him. Nearly the whole of India, except a tiny tip in the south, was under him; and it was easy enough for him to complete the conquest of this little tip. But he refrained. According to H. G. Wells, he is the only military monarch on record who abandoned warfare after victory.

Fortunately for us, we have Ashoka's own words, telling us of what he thought and what he did. In numerous edicts which were carved out in the rock or on metal, we still have his messages to his people and to posterity. You know that there is such an Ashoka Pillar in the fort at Allahabad. There are many others in our province.

In these edicts Ashoka tells us of his horror and remorse at the slaughter which war and conquest involve. The only true conquest, he says, is conquest of self and the conquest of men's hearts by the *Dharma.* But I shall quote for you some of these edicts. They make

fascinating reading and they will bring Ashoka nearer to you.

> "Kalinga was conquered by His Sacred and Gracious Majesty," so runs an edict, "when he had been consecrated eight years. One hundred and fifty thousand persons were thence carried away captive, one hundred thousand were there slain, and many times that number died.
>
> "Directly after the annexation of the Kalingas began His Sacred Majesty's zealous protection of the Law of Piety, his love of that Law, and his inculcation of that Law (Dharma). Thus arose his sacred Majesty's remorse for having conquered the Kalingas, because the conquest of a country previously unconquered involves the slaughter, death and carrying away captive of the people. That is a matter of profound sorrow and regret to His Sacred Majesty."

The edict goes on to say that Ashoka would not tolerate any longer the slaughter or captivity of even a hundredth or thousandth part of the number killed and made captive in Kalinga.

> "Moreover, should any one do him wrong, that too must be borne with by His Sacred Majesty, so far as it can possibly be borne with. Even upon the forest folk in his dominions His Sacred Majesty looks kindly and he seeks to make them think aright, for, if he did not, repentance would come upon His Sacred Majesty. For His Sacred Majesty desires that all animate beings should have security, self-control, peace of mind, and joyousness."

Ashoka further explains that true conquest consists in the conquest of men's hearts by the Law of Duty or Piety and to relate that he had already won such real victories, not only in his own dominions, but in distant kingdoms.

The Law, to which reference is made repeatedly in these edicts, was the Law of the Buddha. Ashoka became an ardent Buddhist and tried his utmost to spread the *Dharma*. But there was no force or compulsion. It was only by winning men's hearts that he sought to make converts. Men of religion have seldom, very seldom, been as tolerant as Ashoka. In order to convert

people to their own faith they have seldom scrupled to use force and terrorism and fraud. The whole of history is full of religious persecution and religious wars, and in the name of religion and of God perhaps more blood has been shed than in any other name. It is good therefore to remember how a great son of India, intensely religious, and the head of a powerful empire, behaved in order to convert people to his ways of thought. It is strange that anyone should be so foolish as to think that religion and faith can be thrust down a person's throat at the point of the sword or a bayonet.

So Ashoka, the beloved of the gods, *devānāmpriya,* as he is called in the edicts, sent his messengers and ambassadors to the kingdoms of the West in Asia, Europe, and Africa. To Ceylon, you will remember, he sent his own brother Mahendra and sister Sanghamitra, and they are said to have carried a branch of the sacred peepal tree from Gaya. Do you remember the peepal tree we saw in the temple at Anuradhapura? We were told that this was the very tree which grew out of that ancient branch.

In India Buddhism spread rapidly. And as the *Dharma* was for Ashoka not just the repetition of empty prayers and the performance of *pūjās* and ceremonies, but the performance of good deeds and social uplift, all over the country public gardens and hospitals and wells and roads grew up. Special provision was made for the education of women. Four great university towns: Takshashila or Taxila in the far north, near Peshawar; Mathura, vulgarly spelt Muttra now by the English; Ujjain in central India; and Nalanda near Patna in Behar, attracted not only students from India but from distant countries—from China to western Asia—and these students carried back home with them the message of Buddha's teaching. Great monasteries grew up all over the country—*Vihāra* they were called. There were apparently so many round about Pataliputra or Patna that the whole province came to be known as Vihara, or, as it is called now, Behar. But,

as often happens, these monasteries soon lost the inspiration of teaching and of thought and became just places where people followed a certain routine and worship.

Ashoka's passion for protecting life extended to animals also. Hospitals especially for them were erected, and animal-sacrifice was forbidden. In both these matters he was somewhat in advance of our own time. Unhappily, animal-sacrifice still prevails to some extent and is supposed to be an essential part of religion; and there is little provision for treatment of animals.

Ashoka's example and the spread of Buddhism resulted in vegetarianism becoming popular. Till then Kshatriyas and Brahmans in India generally ate meat and used to take wines and alcoholic drinks. Both meat-eating and wine-drinking grew much less.

So ruled Ashoka for 38 years, trying his utmost to promote peacefully the public good. He was always ready for public business "at all times and at all places, whether I am dining or in the ladies' apartments, in my bed room or in my closet, in my carriage or in my palace gardens, the official reporters should keep me constantly informed of the people's business." If any difficulty arose, a report was to be made to him immediately "at any hour and at any place" for, as he says, "work I must for the commonweal."

Ashoka died in 226 B.C. Some time before his death he became a Buddhist monk.

We have few remains of Mauryan times. But what we have are practically the earliest so far discovered of Aryan civilization in India—for the moment we are not considering the ruins of Mahen-jo-Daro. In Sarnāth, near Benares, you can see the beautiful Ashoka pillar with the lions on the top.

Of the great city of Pataliputra, which was Ashoka's capital, nothing is left. Indeed over fifteen hundred years ago, six hundred years after Ashoka, a Chinese traveller, Fa-Hien, visited the place. The city flourished then and was rich and prosperous. But even

then Ashoka's palace of stone was in ruins. But even the ruins impressed Fa-Hien, who says in his travel record that they did not appear to be human work.

The palace of massive stone is gone leaving no trace behind, but the memory of Ashoka lives over the whole continent of Asia, and his edicts still speak to us in a language we can understand and appreciate. And we can still learn much from them. This letter has grown long and may weary you. I shall finish it with a small quotation from one of Ashoka's edicts:

> "All sects deserve reverence for one reason or another. By thus acting a man exalts his own sect and at the same time does service to the sects of other people."

25

THE WORLD OF ASHOKA'S TIME

March 31, 1932

We have seen that Ashoka sent missions and ambassadors to distant countries and that there was continuous contact and trade between India and these countries. Of course you must remember when I talk of these contacts and of trade in those days that it was nothing like what we have now. It is easy enough now for people and for merchandize to go by train and steamer and aeroplane. But in those days of the distant past every journey was a perilous and a lengthy one, and only the adventurous and the hardy undertook it. There can, therefore, be no comparison between trade then and now.

What were these 'distant countries' referred to by Ashoka? What was the world like during his time? We know nothing of Africa, except of Egypt and of the Mediterranean coast. We know very little of northern and central and eastern Europe, or of northern and central Asia. Of America also we know nothing; but already there are many people who think that highly developed civilizations existed in the American continents from early times. Columbus is said to have 'discovered' America long after, in the fifteenth century after Christ. We know that a high civilization existed then in Peru in South America and in the sorrounding countries. It is, therefore, quite possible that cultured people dwelt in America and formed well-organized societies in the days when India had Ashoka, in the third century before Christ. But we have no facts about them, and it is not of much use to guess. But I mention them because we are all so apt to think that

civilized people lived only in those parts of the world of which we have heard and read. Europeans for long imagined that ancient history meant practically the history of Greece and of Rome and of the Jews. All the rest of the world apparently was a wilderness in those days, according to their way of thinking. Later they discovered how limited was their knowledge when their own scholars and archæologists told them of China and India and other countries. So we must be on our guard and must not think that our limited knowledge compasses all that has taken place in this world of ours.

For the present, however, we may say that the civilized ancient world of Ashoka's day, that is, the third century before Christ, consisted principally of the Mediterranean countries of Europe and Africa; western Asia, China and India. China was probably more or less cut off then from direct contact with the western countries or even western Asia, and fantastic notions prevailed in the West about China or Cathay. India seems to have been the connecting link between the West and China.

We have already seen that after the death of Alexander his empire was divided up by his generals. There were three principal divisions: (1) Western Asia, Persia, and Mesopotamia, under Seleucus; (2) Egypt under Ptolemy; and (3) Macedonia, under Antigonus. The first two lasted for a long time. You will remember that Seleucus was the neighbour of India and was greedy enough to want to add a bit of India to his empire. But he met more than his match in Chandragupta, who drove him back and made him give up a part of what is now Afghanistan.

Macedonia was less fortunate. It was harried by Gauls and others from the north. Only one part of this kingdom managed to hold out against these Gauls and to remain independent. This was Pergamum in Asia Minor, where Turkey is situated today. It was a little Greek State, but for more than a hundred years it became a home of Greek culture and art, and beautiful

buildings grew up, and a library and museum. In a small way it was a rival to Alexandria across the sea.

Alexandria was the capital of the Ptolemys in Egypt. It became a great city, famous in the ancient world. The glory of Athens had diminished greatly and gradually Alexandria took its place as the cultural centre of the Greeks. Its great library and museum attracted large numbers of students from far countries, who discussed philosophy and mathematics and religion and other problems that filled the minds of the ancient world. Euclid, of whom you and every boy and girl who has been to school has heard, was a resident of Alexandria, a contemporary of Ashoka's.

The Ptolemys were, as you know, Greeks. But they adopted many Egyptian ways and customs. They even took to some of the old gods of Egypt. Jupiter and Apollo and the other gods and goddesses of the old Greeks, who, like the Vedic gods in the *Mahābhārata,* appeared so often in Homer's epics, had to retire or change their names and appear in a different guise. Between the gods and goddesses of old Egypt—Isis and Osiris and Horus—and those of old Greece there was a mingling and an amalgamation, and new gods were put before the multitude for its worship. What did it matter to whom they bowed down and paid worship, and by what name it was known, so long as they had something to do *pūjā!* Of the new gods the most famous was called Serapis.

Alexandria also was a great trading centre, and merchants from other parts of the civilized world came to it. We are told that there was a colony of Indian merchants in Alexandria. We also know that Alexandrian merchants had a settlement in south India on the Malabar coast.

Not far from Egypt, across the Mediterranean, was Rome, already grown great and destined to grow far greater and more powerful. And facing it, on the African coast, was Carthage, its rival and enemy. We

shall have to consider their story at some length, before we can have any idea of the ancient world.

In the East, China was growing as great as Rome in the West, and we shall have to consider this also before we can form a proper picture of the world in Ashoka's time.

26

THE CH'INS AND THE HANS

April 3rd, 1932

In my letters to you last year from Naini I wrote to you something of the early days of China; of the settlements on the Hoang-Ho river, and of the early dynasties, the Hsia, the Shang or Yin, and the Chou. How the Chinese State gradually grew up and a centralized government was developed during these vast periods of time. There followed a long period then, still nominally under the Chou dynasty, when this process of centralization stopped and there was disorganization. Petty rulers of local areas became practically independent and quarrelled with each other. This unfortunate state of affairs lasted for several hundred years—everything in China seems to run into several hundred or a thousand years!—till one of these local rulers, the Duke of Ch'in, managed to drive out the ancient and effete Chou dynasty. His descendants are called the Ch'in dynasty, and it is interesting to note that the name China is derived from this Ch'in.

The Ch'ins began their career thus in China in 255 B.C. Thirteen years previously Ashoka had begun his reign in India. We are thus now dealing with the contemporaries of Ashoka in China. The first three Ch'in emperors had very short reigns. Then, in 246 B.C. came the fourth, who was in his own way a remarkable man. His name was Wang Cheng, but later he adopted another name—Shih Huang Ti—and he is usually known by this second name. It means "The First Emperor." He had evidently a very high opinion of himself and his times, and was no respecter of the past. Indeed, he wanted people to forget the

past and to imagine that history began with him—the great First Emperor! It mattered little that there had already been successive emperors in China for more than two thousand years. Even their memory was to be wiped out from the land. And not only the old emperors but all other famous men of the past must also be forgotten. So the order went forth that all books giving an account of the past, especially books of history and the Confucian classics, were to be burnt and destroyed utterly. The only books excepted were books on medicine and some sciences. In his edict he said:

> "Those who shall make use of antiquity to belittle modern times shall be put to death with their relations."

And he kept his word. Hundreds of scholars who tried to hide books which they loved were buried alive. Nice, kind-hearted and amiable person he must have been, the First Emperor! I remember him always, and not without some sympathy, when I hear too much praise of the past in India. Some of our people are always looking back to the past, always glorifying it and always seeking inspiration from it. If the past inspires to great deeds, by all means let us be inspired by it. But it does not seem to me to be healthy for any person or for any nation to be always looking back. As some one has said, if man was meant to go back or always to look back he would have had eyes at the back of his head. Let us know our past by all means and admire in it whatever is worthy of admiration, but our eyes must always look in front and our steps must go ahead.

Undoubtedly Shih Huang Ti acted in a barbarous way by having the old books and the readers of those books burnt or buried. And the result was that almost all his work ended with him. He was the First Emperor, to be followed by a second and a third, and so on till the end of time. Such was his intention. And yet of all China's dynasties, the Ch'in was the shortest. Many of these dynasties, as I have told you, lasted hundreds and hundreds of years; one of them,

the predecessor of the Ch'ins, lasted as much as 867 years. But the great Ch'ins rose and triumphed and ruled a powerful empire, and decayed and ended—all in a brief fifty years. Shih Huang Ti was to have been the first of a great line of powerful emperors. Yet three years after his death in 209 B.C., his dynasty came to an end. And soon after all the books and the classics of Confucius were dug out of hiding and took the same pride of place as before.

As a ruler Shih Huang Ti was one of the most powerful that China has had. He put an end to the pretensions of the numerous local rulers, destroyed feudalism and built up a strong central government. He conquered the whole of China and even Annam. It was he who started building the Great Wall. This was an expensive job. But the Chinese apparently preferred spending money over this wall, which was to protect them from foreign enemies, to keeping a large standing army for defence. The Wall could hardly prevent a big invasion. All it did was to stop petty raids. It shows, however, that the Chinese wanted peace and, inspite of their strength, were not lovers of military glory.

Shih Huang Ti, the first emperor, died and there was hardly a second of that dynasty to follow. But from his day China has always had a tradition of unity.

Another dynasty then comes upon the scene—the Han dynasty. This flourished for over 400 years. Among the early rulers was a woman-empress. Sixth of the line was Wu-Ti, who is also one of China's most powerful and famous rulers. He was emperor for over fifty years. He defeated the Tartars who were continually raiding the north. From Korea in the east right up to the Caspian Sea in the west, the Chinese Emperor was supreme, and all the tribes of Central Asia acknowledged him as their over-lord. Look at the map of Asia and you will have some idea of the tremendous extent of his influence and of the power of China in the first and second centuries before Christ. We read

a great deal of the greatness of Rome during this period, and one is apt to think that Rome overshadowed the world. 'Mistress of the world' Rome has been called. But though Rome was great then and growing greater, China was a vaster and a more powerful empire.

It was probably in the days of Wu-Ti that China and Rome established their contacts. Trade between the two countries took place through the Parthians, who inhabited the regions called Persia and Mesopotamia today. Later, when there was war between Rome and Parthia, this trade was interrupted. Rome then tried direct trade by sea and a Roman ship actually came to China. But this was in the second century after Christ. We are still in the B.C. period.

Buddhism came to China during the reign of the Han dynasty. It had been heard of in China even before the Christian era, but it began to spread later when the emperor of the day is said to have seen a wonderful dream of a man sixteen feet tall with a bright halo round his head. As he saw this vision in the west, he sent messengers in this direction and these messengers returned with an image of Buddha and Buddhist writings. With Buddhism came the influence of Indian art to China, and from China this spread to Korea and from there to Japan.

During the Han period two other important events are worthy of note. The art of printing from wooden blocks was invented, but it was not much used for nearly a thousand years. But even so China was five hundred years ahead of Europe.

The second noteworthy fact was the introduction of the examination system for public officials. Boys and girls do not love examinations, and I sympathize with them. But this Chinese system of appointing public officials was a remarkable thing in those days. In other countries, till recently, officials were appointed by favouritism chiefly, or out of a special class or caste. In China there could be no such caste. Any one passing the examination could be appointed. This was not an

ideal system, as a person may pass an examination in the Confucian classics and yet may not be a very good public official. But the system was a vast improvement over favouritism and the like, and for 2000 years it lasted in China. It was only recently that it was put an end to.

27

ROME AGAINST CARTHAGE

April 5, 1932

From the Far East we shall now go to the West, and trace the growth of Rome. It is said that Rome was founded in the eighth century before Christ. The early Romans, who were probably descendants of the Aryans, had some settlement on the seven hills near the Tiber, and these settlements slowly grew into a city. And this city State went on growing and expanding in Italy till it reached the southern tip at Messina, facing Sicily.

You will perhaps remember the city States of Greece. Wherever the Greeks went, they carried this idea of their city State with them, and dotted all over the Mediterranean coast were Greek colonies and city States. But now in Rome we are dealing with something very different. To begin with, perhaps Rome was not unlike the Greek city State, but soon it spread by defeating the neighbouring tribes. The territory of the Roman State thus grew and comprised the great part of Italy. Such a big area could not be a city State. It was governed from Rome, and Rome itself had a very peculiar type of government. There was no big emperor or king; nor was there the modern type of republic. Still the government was a kind of republic, dominated over by the rich families owning land. The Senate was supposed to govern, and this Senate was nominated by two elected persons called "Consuls." For long only the aristocrats could become senators. The Roman people were divided into two classes: the patricians or the rich aristocrats, usually landowners; and the plebeians, who were the common citizens. The

history of the Roman State or Republic for several hundred years is one of conflict between these two classes. The patricians have all the power, and with the power goes money; the plebeians, or plebs, are the under-dogs with neither power nor money. The plebeians go on struggling and fighting to gain power and slowly some crumbs fall to their lot. It is interesting to note that in this long struggle the plebs successfully tried non-cooperation of a kind. They marched out of Rome in a body and settled down in a new city. This frightened the patricians as they could not get on without the plebs, and so they compromised with them and gave them some slight privileges. Gradually it became possible for a plebeian to attain high office and even to become a member of the Senate.

We talk of the struggles of the patricians and the plebeians, and we are apt to think that no one else counted. But besides these two groups there was in the Roman State an enormous number of slaves who had no right of any kind. They were not citizens; they had no vote; they were the private and personal property of their master, like a dog or a cow. They could be sold or punished at the sweet will of the master. They could be freed also under certain conditions, and when they became free they formed a special class called freedmen. In the ancient world in the West slaves were always in great demand, and in order to fulfil this demand huge slave-markets arose, and expeditions went out to capture men and women and even children in distant lands and sell them into slavery. The glory and the majesty of ancient Greece and Rome, as of ancient Egypt, had for its foundation a system of wide-spread slavery.

Was this system of slavery equally prevalent then in India? Very probably it was not. Nor did China have it. This does not mean that there was no slavery in ancient India or China. But such slavery as existed was more or less of the domestic kind. A few domestic servants were considered slaves. India and China do

not seem to have had labour slaves, huge gangs working on the land or elsewhere. Thus these two countries escaped the most degrading aspects of slavery.

So Rome grew, and the patricians profitted thereby and grew richer and more prosperous. The plebeians, meanwhile, remained poor and were sat upon by the patricians; and both patrician and plebeian combined to sit upon the poor slave.

As Rome grew, how was it governed? By the Senate, I have said; and the Senate was nominated by two elected Consuls. Who elected the Consuls? The citizens who were voters. To begin with, when Rome was small like a city State, all the citizens lived in or near Rome. It was not very difficult for them to meet together and vote. But as Rome grew, there were many citizens living far from Rome and it was not easy for them to vote. 'Representative government,' as it is called now, was not evolved or practised then. Now, you know, that each area or constituency elects its representative for the national Assembly or Parliament or Congress, and so, in a way, the whole nation is represented in a small gathering. This had not apparently struck the old Romans. So they carried on with their voting in Rome when it was almost impossible for the distant voters to come. Indeed, the distant voters seldom knew what was happening. There were no newspapers or pamphlets or printed books and very few people could read. Thus the power of the vote given to people living far from Rome was of no practical use to them. They had the franchise, but distance disfranchised them.

So that you will notice that it was really the voters in Rome itself that had any real share in elections and in important decisions. They voted in the open air by going into enclosures. Of these voters many were the poor plebeians. The rich patricians who wanted high office and power bribed these poor people to vote for them. So that Roman elections had quite as much

bribery and trickery as sometimes even modern elections have.

As Rome was growing in Italy, Carthage was growing in power in north Africa. The Carthaginians were the descendants of the Phœnicians and had the tradition of seamanship and of trade. Theirs was also a republic, but it was, even more than that of Rome, a republic of rich men. It was a city republic with a huge slave population.

Between Rome and Carthage there were, in the early days, Greek colonies in south Italy and Messina. But Rome and Carthage joined to drive out the Greeks and, having succeeded in doing so, Carthage took Sicily and Rome came right up to the tip of the Italian boot. The friendship and alliance of Rome and Carthage did not last long. Very soon there were clashes between the two, and bitter rivalry developed. The Mediterranean was not big enough for two strong powers facing each other across the narrow seas. Both were ambitious. Rome was growing and had the ambition and confidence of youth. Carthage, to begin with, perhaps looked down a little on upstart Rome and felt confident of its command of the seas. For over a hundred years they fought each other with intervals of peace in between; and they fought like wild animals, bringing misery to vast populations. There were three wars between them —Punic Wars they are called. The first Punic War lasted 23 years from B.C. 264 to 241 and ended in a victory for Rome. Twenty-two years later came the second Punic War and Carthage sent a general, famous in history. His name was Hannibal. For fifteen years Hannibal harassed Rome and terrorized the Roman people. He defeated their armies with great slaughter —notably at Cannae in B.C. 216. And he did all this with little help from Carthage, from where he was cut off as the Romans held command of the sea. But inspite of defeat and disaster and in spite of the perpetual menace of Hannibal, the Roman people did not give in, and fought on against their hated enemy. Afraid of

meeting Hannibal in open battle, they avoided such battles and merely tried to harass him and cut off his communications. The Roman general who was specially fond of avoiding battle in this way was a man called Fabius. For ten years he thus avoided battle. I mention his name not because he was a great man and therefore worthy of remembrance, but because his name has given birth to a word in the English language—Fabian. There are "Fabian" tactics which do not force the issue; they avoid battle or a crisis and hope to gain their end by slow attrition. There is a Fabian Society in England which believes in socialism but does not believe in hurry or sudden changes. I am afraid I am no admirer of the Fabian method in anything.

Hannibal made a great part of Italy a desert, but Rome's persistence and doggedness won in the end. In B.C. 202, at the battle of Zama, Hannibal was defeated. He fled from place to place, pursued by the unquenchable hatred of Rome. At last he poisoned himself.

There was peace for half a century between Rome and Carthage, which had been humbled sufficiently and hardly dared challenge Rome now. Even so Rome was not content, and it forced a third Punic War on it. This ended in the complete destruction of Carthage and in great slaughter. Indeed, the plough was made to till the earth where the proud city of Carthage had once stood, the Queen of the Mediterranean.

28

THE ROMAN REPUBLIC BECOMES AN EMPIRE

April 9, 1932

With the final defeat and destruction of Carthage, Rome was supreme and without a rival in the western world. It had already conquered the Greek States; it took possession of the territories belonging to Carthage. Thus Spain came to Rome after the second Punic War. But still the Roman dominions comprised the Mediterranean countries only. The whole of northern and central Europe was independent of Rome.

In Rome, the result of victory and conquest was wealth and luxury. Gold and slaves poured in from the conquered lands. But where did they go to? The Senate, as I have told you, was the governing body in Rome, and it consisted of people from rich aristocratic families. This group of rich people controlled the Roman Republic and its life, and as the power and extent of Rome grew, the wealth of these people grew with it. So that the rich became richer, while the poor remained poor or actually became poorer. The slave populations grew, and luxury and misery advanced side by side. When this happens there is usually trouble. It is an amazing thing how much a human being will put up with, but there is limit to human endurance and when this is reached there are burst-ups.

The rich people tried to lull the poor by games and contests in circuses, where gladiators were forced to fight and kill each other just to amuse the spectators. Large numbers of slaves and prisoners of war were thus killed for what was called, I suppose, sport.

But disorders increased in the Roman State. There

were insurrections and massacres, and bribery and corruption during the elections. Even the poor downtrodden slaves rose in revolt under a gladiator named Spartacus. But they were crushed ruthlessly, and it is said that six thousand of them were crucified on the Appian Way in Rome.

Adventurers and generals gradually become more important and overshadow the Senate. There is civil war and desolation, and rival generals fighting each other. In the East, in Parthia (Mesopotamia), the Roman legions suffered a great defeat at the battle of Carrhae in 53 B.C. The Parthians wiped off the Roman army sent against them.

Among these crowds of Roman generals two names stand out—Pompey and Julius Cæsar. Cæsar, as you know, conquered France, or Gaul as it was called, and Britain. Pompey went east and had some success there. But between the two there was bitter rivalry. Both were ambitious and could not tolerate a rival. The poor Senate receded into the background although each paid lip-homage to it. Cæsar defeated Pompey and thus became the chief man in the Roman world. But Rome was a republic, and he could not officially be the boss of everything. Attempts were made, therefore, to crown him king or emperor. He was willing enough, but the long republican tradition made him hesitate. Indeed, this tradition was too strong for him, and he was stabbed to death by Brutus and others on the very steps of the Forum, where the Senate used to meet. You must have read Shakespeare's play "Julius Cæsar" in which this scene is given.

Julius Cæsar was killed in the year 44 B.C., but his death did not save the Republic. Cæsar's adopted son and great-nephew, Octavian, and his friend Marc Antony avenged Cæsar's death. And then kingship came back, and Octavian became the chief of the State, the Princeps, and the Republic ceased to be. The Senate continued but without any real power.

Octavian, when he became Princeps or Chief, took

the name and title of Augustus Cæsar. His successors after him were all called Cæsars. Indeed, the word Cæsar came to mean emperor. Kaiser is derived from this same word 'Cæsar.' The word Kaiser has also been an Hindustani word for long—Kaisar-i-Rūm, Kaisar-i-Hind. King George of England now rejoices in the title of *Kaisar-i-Hind*. The German Kaiser is gone, so also the Austrian Kaiser, and the Turkish Kaiser, and Russian Tsar. But it is interesting and curious to consider that the King of England alone today should remain to bear the name or title of Julius Cæsar, who conquered Britain for Rome.

So Julius Cæsar's name has become a word of imperial grandeur. What would have happened if Pompey had beaten him at Pharsalus in Greece? Probably Pompey then would have become princeps or emperor, and the word Pompey might have come to mean emperor. We would then have had the German Pompey (Wilhelm II); and even King George might have become *Pompey-i-Hind*!

During these days of transition for the Roman State—when the Republic was becoming an empire—there lived in Egypt a person destined to become famous in history for her beauty. She was Cleopatra. She has not a very savoury reputation, but she belongs to that limited number of women who are supposed to have changed history because of their beauty. She was quite a girl when Julius Cæsar went to Egypt. Later she became great friends with Marc Antony and did him little good. Indeed, she treacherously deserted him with her ships in the middle of a great naval battle. A famous French writer, Pascal, wrote long ago: *Le nez de Cleopatre, s'il eût été plus court, toute la face de la terre aurait changé*." This is a bit of exaggeration. The world would not have changed very greatly with the nose of Cleopatra. But it is possible that Cæsar began to think of himself as a king or emperor, as a kind of god-ruler, after his visit to Egypt. In Egypt there was no republic. There was a monarchy and the ruler

was not only supreme but was considered almost a god. This was the old Egyptian idea and the Greek Ptolemys, who ruled Egypt after Alexander's death, adopted most of the Egyptian customs and ideas. Cleopatra belonged to this family of the Ptolemys, and was thus a Greek or rather Macedonian princess. She is said to have died of a snake's bite.

Whether Cleopatra helped in the process or not, the Egyptian idea of god-ruler travelled to Rome and found a home there. Even in Julius Cæsar's life-time when the Republic flourished, statues to him were put up and worshipped. We shall see later how this became a regular practice with the Roman Emperors.

We have now reached a great turning-point in the history of Rome—the end of the Republic. Octavian became Princeps under the title of Augustus Cæsar in 27 A.D. We shall have to carry on later this story of Rome and her emperors. Meanwhile, let us have a look at the Roman dominions during the last days of the Republic.

Rome ruled Italy, of course, and Spain and Gaul (France) in the west. In the east, she had Greece and Asia Minor, where, you will remember, there was the Greek State of Pergamum. In north Africa, Egypt was supposed to be an allied and protected State; Carthage, and some other parts of the Mediterranean countries were also under Rome. Thus, in the north, the boundary of the Roman dominions ran along the Rhine. All the peoples of Germany and Russia and north and central Europe were outside the Roman world. So also were all the people to the east of Mesopotamia.

Rome was great in those days, but many people in Europe, ignorant of the history of other countries, imagine that it dominated over the world. This was very far from being the case. At this very period, you will remember, the great Han dynasty of China ruled or was over-lord of an area which stretched right across Asia to the Caspian Sea. At the battle of Carrhae, in Mesopotamia, where the Romans were badly defeated,

it is probable that the Parthians were helped by the Mongolians.

But Roman history, especially the history of the Roman Republic, is dear to the European, as he considers the old Roman State to be a kind of ancestor of the modern European States, and to some extent this is true. And so English school-boys, whether they knew modern history or not, were made to learn Greek and Roman history. I do not know how much time they spend on it now.

And apart from history, I well remember being made to read in the original Latin, Julius Cæsar's account of his campaign in Gaul. Cæsar was not only a warrior but a graceful and effective writer also, and his *De Bello Gallico*, the Gallic War, is still read in thousands of school-rooms in Europe.

We began, a little while ago, to survey the world at the time of Ashoka. We have not only finished that survey but have gone beyond it in China and in Europe. We are now almost on the threshold of the Christian era, and we shall have to go back to India to bring our knowledge of her people up to date. For great changes took place there after Ashoka's death, and new empires arose in the south and the north.

I tried to make you think of world-history as one continuous whole. But you will remember, I hope, that in these early days the contacts between distant countries were of the most limited kind. Rome, which was advanced in many ways knew little of geography and maps and took no special steps to learn. A school-boy or school-girl today knows far more of geography than the great generals and the wise men of the Roman Senate knew, although they considered themselves masters of the world. And just as they considered themselves masters of the world, some thousands of miles away, across the great continent of Asia, the rulers of China also considered themselves the masters of the world.

29

SOUTH INDIA OVERSHADOWS THE NORTH

April 10, 1932

We return to India after our long journeys to China in the Far East, and Rome in the West.

The Mauryan Empire did not last long after Ashoka's death. Within a few years it withered away. The northern provinces fell away, and in the south a new power arose—the Andhra power. Ashoka's descendants continued to rule the vanishing empire for nearly fifty years till they were forcibly removed by their commander-in-chief, a Brahman named Pushyamitra. This man made himself king, and there is said to have been a revival of Brahmanism in his time. Buddhist monks were also persecuted to some extent. But you will find, as you read Indian history, that the way Brahminism attacked Buddhism was much more subtle. It did not do anything so crude as to persecute it much. Some persecution there was, but this was probably political and not religious. The great Buddhist Sanghas were powerful organizations and many rulers were afraid of their political power. Hence their attempts to weaken them. Brahminism ultimately succeeded in almost driving out Buddhism from the country of its birth by assimilating it to some extent and absorbing it and trying to find a place for it in its own house.

Thus the new Brahminism was not a mere going back to the old state of affairs and fighting aggressively all that Buddhism had tried to do. The old leaders of Brahminism were much cleverer. From of old it had been their practice to absorb and assimilate. When the Aryans first came to India they assimilated

much of Dravidian culture and custom, and all through their history they have, consciously or unconsciously, acted in this way. They did likewise with Buddhism and made of Buddha an *avatār* and a god—one of many in the Hindu pantheon. Buddha remained, a person to be worshipped and adored by the multitude, but his special message was quietly put aside, and Brahminism or Hinduism, with minor variations, continued the even tenor of its ways. But this process of Brahminising Buddha was a long one and we are anticipating. Buddhism was to remain in India for many hundred years after Ashoka's death.

We need not trouble ourselves with the kings and dynasties that followed each other in Magadha. About two hundred years after Ashoka's death Magadha even ceased to be the premier State of India, but even then it continued to be a great centre of Buddhist culture.

Meanwhile, important events were taking place both in the north and the south. In the north, there were repeated invasions by various peoples of Central Asia called Baktrians and Sakas and Scythians and Turkis and Kushans. I think I wrote to you once how Central Asia has been a breeding-ground for hordes of people and how these people have come out, again and again in history, and spread out all over Asia and even in Europe. We have several such invasions of India during the two hundred years before Christ. But you must remember that these invasions were not just for conquest and loot. They were for land to settle down in. Most of these Central Asian tribes were nomads and as their numbers grew, the land they lived in was not sufficient to support them. So they had to migrate and seek fresh lands. An even more forceful reason for these great migrations was the pressure from behind. One great tribe or clan would drive away others, and these, in their turn, would be compelled to invade other countries. Thus the people who came as invaders to India were often themselves refugees from their own pastures. The Chinese Empire also, whenever it was strong enough to do so, as

in the days of the Hans, drove these nomads away and thus compelled them to seek new homes.

You must also remember that these nomadic tribes of Central Asia did not look upon India wholly as an enemy country. They are referred to as "barbarians," and undoubtedly compared to the India of those days they were not as civilized. But most of them were ardent Buddhists, and they looked up to India which had given birth to the *Dharma*.

Even in Pushyamitra's time there was an invasion in the north-west. This was by Menander of Baktria. Baktria was the country just across the Indian border. It used to be part of Seleucus's empire, but later it became independent. Menander's invasion was repulsed, but he managed to keep Kabul and Sindh. Menander was also a pious Buddhist.

Later came the invasion of the Sakas who came in great numbers and spread out all over north and west India. The Sakas were a great tribe of Turki nomads. They were pushed out of their pastures by another great tribe, the Kushans. They overran Baktria and Parthia and gradually established themselves in north India, more particularly in the Punjab, Rajputana and Kathiawar. India civilized them and they gave up their nomadic habits.

It is interesting to observe that these Baktrian and Turki rulers in parts of India did not make much difference to Indo-Aryan society. These rulers, being Buddhist, followed the Buddhist Church organization, which was itself based on the old Indo-Aryan plan of democratic village communities. Thus India continued to be, even under these rulers, largely a collection of self-governing village communities or republics, under the central power. During this period also Takshashila and Mathura continued to be great centres of Buddhist learning, attracting students from China and western Asia.

But repeated invasions from the north-west and the gradual break-up of the Mauryan State organization

had one effect. The south Indian States became truer representatives of the old Indo-Aryan system. Thus the centre of Indo-Aryan power went south. Probably many able persons from the north migrated to the south on account of the invasions. You will see later on that this process was repeated a thousand years later when the Muslims invaded India. Even now south India has been far less effected by foreign invasions and contacts than the north. Most of us living in the north have grown up in a composite culture—a mixture of Hindu and Muslim with a dash of the West. Even our language—Hindi or Urdu, or Hindustani, call it what you like—is a composite language. But the south is still, as you have seen yourself, predominantly Hindu and orthodox. For many hundreds of years it tried to protect and preserve the old Aryan tradition, and in this attempt it built up a rigid society which is amazing in its intolerance even today. Walls are dangerous companions. They may occasionally protect from outside evil and keep out an unwelcome intruder. But they also make you a prisoner and a slave and you purchase your so-called purity and immunity at the cost of freedom. And the most terrible of walls are the walls that grow up in the mind which prevent you from discarding an evil tradition simply because it is old, and from accepting a new thought because it is novel.

But south India did a real service by preserving through a thousand years and more the Indo-Aryan traditions not only in religion but in art and in politics. If you want to see specimens of old Indian art now you have to go to south India. In politics, we have it from Megasthenes, the Greek, that the popular assemblies of the South restrained the power of kings.

Not only the learned men but the artists and builders and artisans and craftsmen went south when Magadha declined. A considerable trade flourished between south India and Europe. Pearls, ivory, gold, rice, pepper, peacocks, and even monkeys, were sent to Babylon and Egypt and Greece, and later to Rome.

Teakwood from the Malabar Coast went even earlier to Chaldæa and Babylonia. And all this trade, or most of it, was carried in Indian ships, manned by Dravidians. This will enable you to realize what an advanced position south India occupied in the ancient world. Large numbers of Roman coins have been discovered in the south and, as I have already told you, there were Alexandrian colonies on the Malabar Coast and Indian colonies in Alexandria.

Soon after Ashoka's death the Andhra State in the south became independent. Andhra, as you perhaps know, is a Congress province now, along the east coast of India, north of Madras. Telugu is the language of Andhra-desha. The Andhra power extended rapidly after Ashoka till it spread right across the Deccan from sea to sea.

From the south great colonizing enterprises were undertaken, but of these we shall speak later.

I have referred above to the Sakas and Scythians and others who invaded India and settled down in the north. They became part of India and we in north India are as much descended from them as from the Aryans. In particular, the brave and fine-looking Rajputs and the hardy people of Kathiawar are their descendants.

30

THE BORDERLAND EMPIRE OF THE KUSHANS

April 11, 1932

I have told you in my last letter of the repeated Saka and Turki invasions of India. I have also told you of the growth of a powerful Andhra State in the south stretching from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea. The Sakas were driven forward by the Kushans. Some time later these Kushans themselves appeared on the scene. In the first century before Christ they established a State on the Indian borderland and this State grew into a great empire. This Kushan Empire extended upto Benares and the Vindhya mountains in the south, and to Kashgar and Yarkand and Khotan in the north, and the borders of Persia and Parthia in the west. Thus the whole of northern India, including the United Provinces, Panjab and Kashmir, and a good bit of Central Asia were under the Kushan rulers. This empire lasted for nearly three hundred years, just about the time when the Andhra State flourished in south India. The Kushan capital at first seems to have been Kabul; later it was shifted to Peshawar, or Purushapura as it was called, and there it remained.

This Kushan Empire is interesting in many ways. It was a Buddhist empire, and one of its famous rulers—the Emperor Kanishka—was ardently devoted to the *Dharma*. Near Peshawar, the capital, was Takshashila which had for long been a centre of Buddhist culture. The Kushans, as I think I have told you, were Mongolians, or allied to them. From the Kushan capital there must have been a continuous coming and going to the Mongolian homelands, and Buddhist learning

and Buddhist culture must have gone to China and Mongolia. In the same way, western Asia must have come into intimate touch with Buddhist thought. Western Asia had been under Greek rule since Alexander's day and large numbers of Greeks had brought their culture to it. This Greek Asiatic culture mingled now with Indian Buddhist culture.

Thus China and western Asia were influenced by India. But in the same manner India was influenced by them. The Kushan Empire sat, like a colossus astride on the back of Asia, in between the Græco-Roman world on the west, the Chinese world in the east and the Indian world in the south. It was a half-way house both between India and Rome, and India and China.

As you might expect, this central position helped to bring about close intercourse between India and Rome. The Kushan period corresponded with the last days of the Roman Republic, when Julius Cæsar was alive, and the first two hundred years of the Roman Empire. It is said that the Kushan Emperor sent a great embassy to Augustus Cæsar. Trade flourished both by land and sea. Among the articles which were sent by India to Rome were perfumes, spices, silks, brocades, muslins, cloth of gold, and precious stones. A Roman author, named Pliny, actually complains bitterly of the drain of gold from Rome to India. He says that these luxuries cost the Roman Empire one hundred million sesterces annually. This would be about a crore and a half rupees.

During this period there was great debate and argument in the Buddhist monasteries and in the meetings of the Sangha. New ideas, or old ideas in novel attire, were coming from the south and the west, and the simplicity of Buddhist thought was being gradually affected. This process of change went on till it resulted in Buddhism splitting up into two sections—called the Mahāyāna (the Great Vehicle) and the Hinayāna (Little Vehicle). And as the outlook on life and reli-

gion changed with the new interpretations and ideas, the manifestations of these ideas in art and architecture also changed. It is not easy to say how these changes were brought about. Perhaps there were two main influences which both tended to deflect Buddhist thought in the same direction: Brahminic and Hellenic.

Buddhism was, I have told you several times, a revolt against caste and priestcraft and ritualism. Gautama did not approve of image-worship. He did not claim to be a god to be worshipped. He was the Enlightened One, the Buddha. In accordance with this ideology Buddha was not represented in images and the architecture of those days avoided all images. But the Brahmans wanted to bridge the gap between Hinduism and Buddhism and were always trying to introduce Hindu ideas and symbolism into Buddhist thought; and the craftsmen from the Græco-Roman world were also used to making images of the gods. Thus gradually images crept into the Buddhist shrines. To begin with, they were not of the Buddha but of the Bodhi-Sattvas who, in Buddhist tradition, are said to be previous incarnations of Buddha. The process continued till Buddha himself was depicted in images and worshipped.

The Māhāyana school of Buddhism approved of these changes. It was nearer to the Brahman way of thinking. The Kushan emperors accepted the Mahāyāna school and helped it to spread. But they were by no means intolerant of the Hinayāna school or even of other religions. Kanishka is said to have encouraged Zoroastrianism also.

It is interesting to read of the great debates that used to take place between the learned about the relative merits of Mahāyāna and Hinayāna. Huge gatherings of the Sangha used to be held for this purpose. Kanishka held a general assembly of the Sangha in Kashmir. The debates and the controversy on this question lasted many hundreds of years. Mahāyāna triumphed in north India, Hinayāna in the south, till both of them, in India, were absorbed by Hinduism.

Today the Mahāyāna form of Buddhism exists in China, Japan and Tibet; the Hinayāna exists in Ceylon and Burma.

The art of a people is a true mirror of their minds, and so, as the simplicity of early Buddhist thought gave place to elaborate symbolism, even so Indian art became more and more elaborate and ornate. In particular, the Mahāyāna sculpture of the north-west, in Gandhara, was full of elaboration of statuary and ornament. Even the Hinayāna architecture could not keep itself wholly untouched by this new phase, and it lost gradually the restraint and simplicity of its earlier style and took to rich carving and symbolism.

There are a few monuments of this period with us still. The most interesting are some of the beautiful frescoes at Ajanta. You nearly saw them last year. You must not miss again an opportunity of going there.

We shall now bid good-bye to the Kushans. But remember this. Like the Sakas and other Turki peoples, the Kushans, hardly came to India or ruled over India as aliens governing a conquered country. The bond of religion tied them to India and her people, but besides this they adopted the principles of government of the Aryan people in India. And because they fitted in with the Aryan system to a large extent, they succeeded in ruling north India for nearly three hundred years.

31

JESUS AND CHRISTIANITY

April 12, 1932

The Kushan empire in the north-west of India and the Han dynasty in China have carried us beyond an important land-mark in history, and we must go back to it. So far we have been dealing with dates B.C., before Christ. Now we are in the Christian Era—A.D., or A.C. The era, as its name implies, dates from Christ, from the supposed date of birth of Christ. As a matter of fact, it is probable that Christ was born four years before this date, but that makes little difference. It is customary to refer to dates after Christ as A.D.—Anno Domini—in the year of the Lord. There is no harm in following this widespread practice, but it seems to me more scientific to use the letters A.C.—after Christ—for these dates, just as we have been using B.C. I propose to do so.

The story of Christ or Jesus, as his name was, is given in the New Testament of the Bible and you know something about it. In these accounts given in the Gospels little is said about his youth. He was born at Nazareth, he preached in Galilee, and he came to Jerusalem when he was over thirty. Soon after he was tried and sentenced by the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. It is not clear what Jesus did or where he went before he started his preaching. All over Central Asia, in Kashmir and Ladakh and Tibet and even further north, there is still a strong belief that Jesus or Īsā travelled about there. Some people believe that he visited India also. It is not possible to say anything with certainty, and indeed most authorities who have studied the life of Jesus do not believe that Jesus came to India

or Central Asia. But there is nothing inherently improbable in his having done so. In those days the great universities of India, specially Takshashila in the north-west, attracted earnest students from distant countries and Jesus might well have come there in quest of knowledge. In many respects the teaching of Jesus is so similar to Gautama's teaching that it seems highly probable that he was fully acquainted with it. But Buddhism was sufficiently known in other countries, and Jesus could well have known of it without coming to India.

Religions, as every school-girl knows, have led to conflict and bitter struggles. But it is interesting to watch the beginnings of the world-religions and to compare them. There is so much that is similar in their outlook and their teaching that one wonders why people should be foolish enough to quarrel about details and unessentials. But the early teachings are added to and distorted till it is difficult to recognize them; and the place of the teacher is taken by narrow-minded and intolerant bigots. Often enough religion has served as a handmaiden to politics and imperialism. It was the old Roman policy to cultivate superstition for the benefit, or rather for the exploitation, of the masses. It was easier to keep down people if they were superstitious. The Roman aristocrats would consent to dabble in high philosophy, but what was good for them was not good or safe for the masses. Machiavelli a famous Italian of a later day, who has written a book on politics, states that religion is necessary for government, and that it may be the duty of a ruler to support a religion which he believes to be false. Even in recent times we have had innumerable instances of imperialism advancing under the cloak of religion. It is not surprising that Karl Marx wrote that "Religion was the opium of the masses."

Jesus was a Jew, and the Jews were and are a peculiar and strangely persevering people. After a brief period of glory in the days of David and Solomon they

fell on evil days. Even this glory was on a small scale, but it was magnified in their imaginations till it became a kind of Golden Age of the past, which would come again at the appointed time when the Jews would become great and powerful. They spread out all over the Roman Empire and elsewhere, but held together, firm in the belief that their day of glory was coming and that a messiah would usher this in. It is one of the wonders of history how the Jews, without a home or a refuge, harassed and persecuted beyond measure, often done to death, have preserved their identity for over two thousand years; and today they still hold together and are rich and powerful.

The Jews expected a messiah and perhaps they had hopes of Jesus. But they were soon disappointed. Jesus talked a strange language of revolt against existing conditions and the social order. In particular he was against the rich and the hypocrites who made of religion a matter of certain observances and ceremonial. Instead of promising wealth and glory, he asked people to give up even what had for a vague and mythical Kingdom of Heaven. He talks in stories and parables but it is clear that he was a born rebel who could not tolerate existing conditions and was out to change them. This was not what the Jews wanted, and so most of them went against him and handed him over to the Roman authorities.

The Roman people were not intolerant so far as religions went. The Empire tolerated all religions, and even if some one chose to blaspheme or curse any of the gods, he was not punished. As one of the emperors, Tiberius, said: "If the gods are insulted, let them see to it themselves." The Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, before whom Jesus was produced, could not therefore have worried about the religious aspect of the matter. Jesus was looked upon as a political, and by the Jews as a social, rebel; and as such he was tried and sentenced at Gethsemane, and crucified at Golgotha. In the hour of his agony even his chosen

disciples deserted him and denied him, and by their betrayal made his suffering almost unbearable, so that, as he died, he uttered those strangely moving words: "My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

Jesus was quite young. He was little over thirty when he died. We read in the beautiful language of the Gospels the tragic story of his death and are moved. The growth of Christianity in after ages has made millions revere the name of Jesus, although they have seldom followed his teachings. But we must remember that when he was crucified, he was not widely known outside Palestine. The people in Rome knew nothing about him, and even Pontius Pilate must have attached little importance to the incident.

The immediate followers and disciples of Jesus were frightened into denying him. But soon a newcomer, Paul, who had not seen Jesus himself, started spreading what he considered to be the Christian doctrine. Many people think that the Christianity that Paul preached was very different from the teachings of Jesus. Paul was an able and learned person, but he was not such a social rebel as Jesus was. Paul succeeded however and Christianity gradually spread. The Romans attached little importance to it to begin with. They thought Christians were a sect of the Jews. But the Christians were aggressive. They were hostile to all other religions and they refused absolutely to worship the emperor's image. The Romans could not understand this mentality, and, as it appeared to them, narrow-mindedness. They considered the Christians therefore as cranks who were pugnacious and uncultured and opposed to human progress. As a religion, they might have tolerated them, but the Christian refusal to pay homage to the emperor's image was looked upon as political treason and was made punishable with death. The Christians also strongly criticized the gladiatorial shows. Then followed the persecution of the Christians. Their property was confiscated and they were thrown to the lions. You must have read

stories of these Christian martyrs and perhaps you have also seen cinema films of them. But when a person is prepared to die for a Cause, and indeed to glory in such death, it is impossible to suppress him or the Cause he represents. And the Roman Empire wholly failed to suppress the Christians. Indeed, it was Christianity that came out triumphant in the conflict, and early in the fourth century after Christ, one of the Roman emperors himself became a Christian, and Christianity became the official religion of the Empire. This was Constantine, who founded Constantinople. We shall come to him later.

As Christianity grew, violent disputes arose about the divinity of Jesus. You will remember my telling you how Gautama the Buddha, who claimed no divinity came to be worshipped as a god and as an *avatār*. Similarly, Jesus claimed no divinity. His repeated statements that he was the son of God and the son of man do not necessarily mean any divine or superhuman claim. But human beings like to make gods of their great men, whom having deified they refrain from following! Six hundred years later the Prophet Mohammed started another great religion but profiting perhaps by these instances he stated clearly and repeatedly that he was human and not divine.

So, instead of understanding and following the teachings of Jesus, Christians argued and quarrelled about the nature of Jesus's divinity and about the Trinity. They called each other heretics and persecuted each other and cut each other's heads off. There was a great and violent controversy at one time among different Christian sects over a certain diphthong. One party said that the word *Homo-ousion* should be used in a prayer; the other wanted *Homoi-ousion*—this difference had reference to the divinity of Jesus. Over this diphthong fierce war was raged and large numbers of people slaughtered.

These internal disputes took place as the Church grew in power. They have continued between various

Christian sects till quite recent times in the West.

You may be surprised to learn that Christianity came to India long before it went to England or western Europe, and when even in Rome it was a despised and proscribed sect. Within a hundred years or so of the death of Jesus, Christian missionaries came to south India by sea. They were received courteously and permitted to preach their new faith. They converted a large number of people and these people have lived there, with varying fortunes, to this day. Most of them belong to old Christian sects which have ceased to exist in Europe. Some of these have their headquarters now in Asia Minor.

Christianity is politically the dominant religion today, because it is the religion of the dominant peoples of Europe. But it is strange to think of the rebel Jesus preaching non-violence and *ahimsā* and a revolt against the social order, and then to compare him with his loud-voiced followers of today with their imperialism and armaments and wars and worship of wealth. The Sermon on the Mount and modern European and American Christianity—how amazingly dissimilar they are! It is not surprising that many people should think that Bapu is far nearer to Christ's teaching than most of his so-called followers in the West today.

32

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

April 23, 1932

I have not written to you for many days, my dear. I have been disturbed and thrilled by news from Allahabad, and, above all, by news of Dol Amma, your old grandmother. And I have chafed a little at my comparative comfort in gaol when my mother, frail and weak, has to face and receive the *lāthi* blows of the police. But I must not allow my thoughts to run away with me and to interfere with my story.

We shall go back to Rome, or Romaka as the old Sanskrit books have it. You will remember that we have talked of the end of the Roman Republic and of the coming of the Roman Empire. Octavian, the adopted son of Julius Cæsar, became the monarch, under the name of Augustus Cæsar. He did not call himself king, partly because the title was not considered big enough for him, and partly because he wanted to keep up the outward forms of the Republic. He therefore called himself 'Imperator' or commander. This word imperator thus came to be the highest title, and, as you perhaps know, the English word 'emperor' comes from it. So the early empire in Rome gave two words, which were long coveted and used by monarchs all over the world almost—emperor and Cæsar or Kaiser or Tsar. Originally, it was supposed that there could only be one emperor at one time, a kind of boss of the whole world. Rome was called Mistress of the World, and people in the West thought that the whole world was overshadowed by Rome. This was of course incorrect and only displayed ignorance of geography and history. The Roman Empire was largely a Mediterranean empire and

never went beyond Mesopotamia in the east. There were bigger and more powerful and more cultured States in China and India from time to time. None the less, so far as the western world was concerned Rome was the sole empire, and so such represented a kind of world-empire to the ancients. It had tremendous prestige.

The most wonderful thing about Rome is this idea behind it—the idea of world-dominion, of the headship of the world. Even when Rome fell, this idea protected it and gave it strength. And the idea persevered even when it was cut off completely from Rome itself. So much so that the Empire itself vanished and became a phantom, but the idea remained.

I find it a little difficult to write of Rome and of its successors. It is not easy to pick and choose what to tell you, and my mind is, I am afraid, a bit of a jumble of ill-assorted pictures gathered from old books that I have read. The reading has been largely done in prison. Indeed, one of the famous books on Roman history I would probably not have read if I had not come to prison. The book is so big that it is difficult to find time, in the midst of other activities, to read it right through. It is called *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and is by an Englishman named Gibbon. It was written quite a long time ago—about a hundred and fifty years —on the shores of Lac Leman in Switzerland, but it makes fascinating reading even now, and I found its story, given in somewhat pompous but melodious language, more engrossing than any novel. Nearly ten years ago I read it in Lucknow District Jail, and for over a month I lived with Gibbon for a close companion, wrapped up in the images of the past that his language evoked. I was suddenly discharged before I had quite finished the book. The charm was broken, and I found some difficulty in finding the time and the mood to go back to ancient Rome and Constantinople and read the hundred pages or so that remained.

But this was nearly ten years ago and, of course,

I have forgotten a very great deal of what I read then. Still enough remains in my mind to fill it and confuse it and I do not want the confusion to pass on to you.

Let us, first of all, cast a look on the Roman Empire or Empires through the ages. Later, perhaps one may try to fill in the picture a little.

The Empire begins with Augustus Cæsar on the eve of the Christian era. For a little while the emperors pay deference to the Senate but almost the last traces of the Republic disappear soon enough, and the emperor becomes all powerful, a wholly autocratic monarch, indeed almost a god. During his life-time he is worshipped as semi-divine. After his death he becomes a full god. All the writers of the day endow most of the early emperors with every virtue—specially Augustus. They call it the Golden Age, the Age of Augustus, when every virtue flourished and the good were rewarded and the wicked punished. That is the way writers have in despotic countries, where it is obvious that the praise of the ruler pays. Some of the most famous of Latin authors—Virgil, Ovid, Horace—whose books we had to read at school, lived about this time. It is possible that after the civil wars and troubles which took place continually during the latter days of the Republic, it was a great relief to have a period of peace and respite when trade could flourish and also some measure of civilization.

But what was this civilization? It was a rich man's civilization, and not even like the artistic and keen-witted rich of ancient Greece, but a rather commonplace and dull crowd, whose chief job was to enjoy themselves. From all over the world foods and articles of luxury came for them, and there was great magnificence and show. The tribe of such people is not extinct even yet! There was pomp and show and gorgeous processions and games in the circus and gladiators done to death. But behind this pomp was the misery of the masses. There was heavy taxation which fell on the common people chiefly, and the burden of work fell on the innumerable slaves. Even their doctoring and phi-

losophizing and thinking the great ones of Rome left largely to Greek slaves! There was exceedingly little attempt to educate or to find out facts about the world of which they called themselves the masters.

Emperor followed emperor, and some were bad and some were very bad. And gradually the army became all-powerful and could make and unmake emperors. So it came about that there was bidding to gain the favour of the army and money was squeezed from the masses or from conquered territories to bribe the army. One of the great sources of revenue was the slave-trade and there were regular organized slave-hunts by Roman armies in the east. Slave merchants accompanied the armies to buy up the slaves on the spot. The island of Delos, sacred to the old Greeks, became a great slave-market, where sometimes as many as ten thousand were sold in a day! In the great Colosseum of Rome, a popular emperor used to display as many as twelve hundred gladiators at a time—slaves who were to die to provide sport for the emperor and his people.

Such was Roman civilization in the days of the Empire. And yet our friend Gibbon writes that: "If a man were called upon to fix the period in the history of the world when the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus"—this means the 84 years from 96 A.C. to 180 A.C. I am afraid Gibbon, with all his learning, has said something with which most people will certainly hesitate to agree. He talks of the human race, meaning thereby the Mediterranean world chiefly. He could have had little or no knowledge of India or China or ancient Egypt.

But perhaps I am a little hard on Rome. It must have been a pleasant change to have some measure of peace within the Roman dominions. There were frequent wars at the frontiers but within the Empire there was during the early days at least the *Pax Romana*—the Roman Peace. There was some security and this

brought trade. Roman citizenship was extended to the whole Roman world—but remember that the poor slaves had nothing to do with it. And also remember that the emperor was all-powerful and the citizen had few rights. Any discussion on politics would have been considered treason to the Imperator! For the upper classes there was a measure of uniform government and one law. This must have been a great gain to many people who had previously suffered under worse despotisms.

Gradually the Romans became too lazy or otherwise unfit even to fight in their own armies. The farmers in the countryside became poorer under the burdens they had to carry, and so did the people in the city. But the emperors wanted to keep the city folk pleased, so that they might not give trouble. For this purpose free bread was given to the people of Rome and free games in the circus to amuse them. Thus they were kept in good humour but this free distribution could only take place in a few places and even this was done at the cost of misery and suffering to the slave populations in other countries like Egypt, who provided the free flour.

As the Roman people did not easily go into the armies, people from outside the Empire—"barbarians" as they were called—were enlisted, and the Roman armies came largely to consist of people who were allied or related to the 'barbarian' enemies of Rome. On the frontiers these "barbarian" tribes continually pressed and hemmed in the Romans. As Rome grew weaker the 'barbarians' seemed to grow stronger and more daring. From the east especially there was danger and as this frontier was far from Rome, it was not easy to defend it. Three hundred years after Augustus Cæsar, an emperor named Constantine took a great step which was to have far-reaching consequences. He actually shifted his seat of empire from Rome to the East. Near an old city called Byzantium on the shores of the Bosphorus, betwen the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, he founded

a new city which he called, after himself, Constantinople. Constantinople, or New Rome as it was also called, became then the capital and seat of the Roman Empire. Even today in many parts of Asia Constantinople is known as Rūm or Roum.

33

THE ROMAN EMPIRE SPLITS UP AND FINALLY BECOMES A GHOST

April 24, 1932

We shall continue today our survey of the Empire of Rome. Early in the fourth century of the Christian era—in 326 A.C.—Constantine founded the city of Constantinople, near the site of old Byzantium, and he carried the capital of his empire all the way from old Rome, to this New Rome, on the Bosphorus. Have a look at the map. You will see that this new city of Constantinople stands on the edge of Europe looking out towards mighty Asia; it is a kind of link between the two continents. Many great trade-routes passed through it, both by land and sea. It is a fine position for a city and for a capital. Constantine chose well, but he or his successors had to pay for this change of capital. Just as old Rome was a bit too far from Asia Minor and the East, so the new eastern capital was too far from the western countries, like Gaul and Britain.

To get over this difficulty for a while there were joint emperors, one sitting in Rome, the other in Constantinople. This led to a regular division of the Empire into the Western and the Eastern. But the Western Empire, which had Rome for its capital, did not long survive the shock. It could not defend itself against those whom it called the 'Barbarians.' The Goths, a Germanic tribe, came and sacked Rome, and then came the Vandals and the Huns and the Western Empire collapsed. You must have heard the use of the word Hun. During the last Great War it was commonly applied by the English to the Germans in order to make out that the Germans were very cruel and barbarous.

As a matter of fact in war time everybody, or almost everybody, loses his head and forgets all that he has learnt of civilization and good manners and behaves cruelly and barbarously. The Germans behaved in this way; so did the English and the French. There was little to choose.

So the word Hun has become a terrible term of reproach. So also the word Vandal. Probably these Huns and Vandals were rather coarse and cruel and did a lot of damage, but we must remember that all the accounts of them that we have got are from their enemies the Romans, and one can hardly expect them to be very partial. Anyhow the Goths and the Vandals and the Huns knocked down the Western Roman Empire like a house of cards. One of the reasons why they succeeded so easily was probably because the Roman peasantry was so utterly miserable under the Empire and were so heavily taxed and so much in debt, that they welcomed any change. Just as the poor Indian peasant today would welcome any change in his terrible poverty and misery.

The Western Roman Empire thus collapsed. Some centuries later it was to rise again in a different form. The Eastern Empire however continued, although it was hard put to it to withstand the attacks of the Huns and others. Not only did it survive these attacks, but it carried on century after century in spite of continuous fighting against the Arabs, and later, the Turks. For the amazing period of eleven hundred years it survived till at last it fell in 1453 A.C. when Constantinople was captured by the Ottoman Turks or the Osmanlis. Ever since then, for nearly five hundred years now, Constantinople, or Istanbul as they call it, has been in the possession of the Turks. From there they repeatedly marched into Europe and came right up to the walls of Vienna. They were driven back gradually in later centuries, and a dozen years ago, after their defeat in the Great War, they nearly lost Constantinople. The English were in possession of this city and the Turkish Sultan was a puppet in their hands. But a

great leader, Mustafa Kamal Pasha, came to rescue his people and, after a heroic struggle, he succeeded. Today Turkey is a republic and the Sultan has vanished for ever. Kamal Pasha is the President of the Republic. Constantinople, the seat of an empire for fifteen hundred years, first the Eastern Roman and then the Turk, is still part of the Turkish State but it is not even its capital. The Turks have preferred to keep away from its imperial associations and to have their capital at Angora, (or Ankara) far away in Asia Minor.

We have dashed through nearly two thousand years and followed rapidly the changes which came, one after another, the founding of Constantinople and the transfer of the capital of the Roman Empire to the new city. But Constantine did another novel thing. He turned Christian and, as he was the emperor, that meant of course that Christianity became the official religion of the Empire. It must have been a strange thing, this sudden change in the position of Christianity—from a persecuted faith to an imperial religion. The change did not do it much good for a while. Different sects of Christians started quarrelling with each other. Ultimately there was a great break between two sections—the Latin section and the Greek. The Latin section had its headquarters in Rome and the Bishop of Rome was looked up to as its head—later to become the Pope of Rome; and the Greek section had its headquarters in Constantinople. The Latin Church spread all over northern and western Europe and came to be known as the Roman Catholic Church. The Greek Church was known as the Orthodox Church. After the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire, Russia was the chief country where the Orthodox Church flourished. Now with Bolshevism in Russia this Church, or any Church, has no official position there.

I refer to the Eastern Roman Empire, and yet this had little to do with Rome. Even the language they used was Greek, not Latin. In a sense, it might almost be considered a continuation of Alexander's Greek Em-

pire. It had little touch with western Europe, although for long it would not admit the right of western countries to be independent of it. And yet the Eastern Empire stuck to the word Roman and the people were called Roman, as if there was some magic in the word. And stranger still, the city of Rome in spite of its fall from the headship of Empire, did not lose its prestige, and even the barbarian who came to conquer it, seemed to hesitate, and treated her with deference. Such is the power of a great name, and the power of ideas!

Having lost the Empire, Rome started carving out a new empire, but a different kind of one. It was said that Peter, the disciple of Jesus, had come to Rome and become the first bishop there. This gave sanctity to the place in the eyes of many Christians and added special importance to the bishopric of Rome. The Bishop of Rome was, to begin with, not unlike other bishops, but he grew in importance after the Emperor went to Constantinople. There was no one to overshadow him then, and, as the occupier of the chair of Peter, he came to be regarded as the chief of the bishops. Later he came to be called the Pope, and as you know the Popes exist to this day and are the heads of the Roman Catholic Church.

It is curious to note that one of the reasons for the split between the Roman Church and the Greek Orthodox Church was the use of images. The Roman Church encouraged the worship of the images of its saints and especially of Mary, the mother of Jesus. The Orthodox Church objected to this strongly.

Rome was occupied and ruled for many generations by chiefs of the northern tribes. But even they often acknowledged the over-lordship of the Emperor at Constantinople. Meanwhile the power of the Bishop of Rome, as a religious head, grew, till he felt strong enough to defy Constantinople. When trouble came over the question of image-worship, the Pope decided to cut Rome off completely from the East. Much had happened meanwhile of which we shall have to speak

later—a new religion, Islam, had arisen in Arabia, and the Arabs had overrun all north Africa and Spain, and were attacking the heart of Europe; new States were being formed in north and west Europe; and the Eastern Roman Empire was being fiercely assailed by the Arabs.

The Pope begged for assistance from a great leader of the Franks, a Germanic tribe of the north, and later, Karl or Charles, the head of the Franks, was crowned emperor in Rome. This was quite a new empire or State but they called it the "Roman Empire" and later, the "Holy Roman Empire." They could not think of an Empire without its being Roman, and although Charlemagne, or Charles the Great, as he is called, had little to do with Rome he became Imperator and Cæsar and Augustus. The new Empire was supposed to be a continuation of the old one. But there was an addition to its name. It had become 'Holy.' It was holy because it was specially a Christian Empire with the Pope for its god-father.

Again you see the strange power of ideas. A Frank or a German living in Central Europe becomes Roman Emperor! And the future history of this 'Holy' Empire is stranger still. As an empire, it became a very shadowy affair. While the Eastern Roman Empire at Constantinople carried on as a State, this Western one changed and vanished and appeared again from time to time. It was indeed a phantom and ghostly empire, continuing to exist in theory by the prestige of the Roman name and the Christian Church. It was an empire of the imagination with little of reality. Someone, I think it was Voltaire, defined this 'Holy Roman Empire' as something which was neither Holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire! Just as some one else once defined the Indian Civil Service, with which we are unfortunately still afflicted in this country, as neither Indian, nor civil, nor a service!

Whatever it was, this phantom Holy Roman Empire carried on in name at least for a thousand years, and

it was only a little over a hundred years ago, in Napolean's time, that it finally ended. The end was not very remarkable or dramatic. Indeed few people must have noticed it, as in reality it had not existed for a long time. But the ghost was laid at last. Not finally, for it rose up again in different guises as Kaisers and Tsars and the like. Most of these were laid to rest during the Great War which ended 14 years ago.

34

THE IDEA OF THE WORLD STATE

April 25, 1932

I fear I must tire you and perplex you often enough with these letters. Especially my last two letters about the Roman Empires must be a trial for you. I have gone backwards and forwards through thousands of years and across thousands of miles, and if I have succeeded in creating some confusion in your mind, the fault is entirely mine. Don't be down-hearted. Carry on. If you do not follow what I say at any place, do not trouble about it, but go on. These letters are not meant to teach you history, but just to give you glimpses and to waken your curiosity.

You must be rather tired of the Roman Empires. I confess I am. But we shall bear with them a little more today and then take leave of them for a while.

You know that there is a great deal of talk now-a-days of nationalism and patriotism—the love of one's country. Nearly all of us in India today are intense nationalists. This nationalism is quite a new thing in history and perhaps we may study its beginning and growth in the course of these letters. There was hardly any such feeling at the time of the Roman Empires. The empire was supposed to be one great State ruling the world. There never has been an empire or State which has ruled the whole world, but, owing to ignorance of geography, and the great difficulty of transportation and travelling long distances, people often thought in olden times that such a State did exist. Thus, in Europe and round the Mediterranean the Roman State even before it became an empire was looked up to as a kind of super-State to which all the

others were subordinate. So great was its prestige that some countries like Pergamum, the Greek State in Asia Minor, and Egypt were actually presented to the Roman people by their rulers. They felt that Rome was all-powerful, irresistible. And yet, as I have told you, whether as a Republic or an Empire, Rome never ruled over much more than the Mediterranean countries. The 'barbarians' of the north of Europe would not submit to it and it did not care much about them. But whatever the extent of Rome's authority might have been, it had the idea of a World-State behind it and this idea was accepted by most people of the day in the West. It was because of this that the Roman Empires survived for so long, and their name and prestige were great even when there was no substance behind them.

This idea of one great State dominating over the rest of the world was not peculiar to Rome. We find it in China and India in the old days. As you know the Chinese State was often a vaster one than the Roman Empire. It spread right up to the Caspian Sea. The Chinese Emperor, "the son of Heaven" as he was called, was considered by the Chinese as the Universal Sovereign. It is true there were tribes and people who gave trouble and who did not obey the Emperor. But they were the 'barbarians,' just as the Romans called the north Europeans 'barbarians.'

In the same way in India from the earliest days you find references to these so-called universal sovereigns—*Chakravartī Rājās.* Their idea of the world was very limited of course. India itself was so enormous that it seemed the world to them, and the over-lordship of India appeared to them to be the over-lordship of the world. The others outside were the 'barbarians,' the *mlechchhas.* The mythical Bharat who has given his name to our country—Bharat-Varsha—is supposed by tradition to have been such a chakravartī sovereign. Yudhishthira and his brothers fought, according to the Mahabharata, for this world-sovereignty. The *ashwamedha,* the great horse-sacrifice, was a challenge and

symbol of world-dominion. Ashoka probably aimed at it when, overcome by remorse, he stopped all fighting. Later on you will see other imperialist sovereigns of India, like the Guptas, who also aimed at this.

You will thus see that in the old days people often thought in terms of Universal Sovereigns and World-States. Long afterwards came nationalism and a new kind of imperialism, and between the two they have played sufficient havoc in this world. Again there is talk today of a World-State. Not a great empire, or a Universal Sovereign. No more empires or sovereigns are needed. But a kind of World-Republic which would prevent the exploitation of one nation or people or class by another. Whether anything like this will take place or not in the near future, it is difficult to say. But the world is in a bad way and there seems no other way to get rid of its illness.

I have referred repeatedly to the 'Barbarians' of northern Europe. I use the word because they are referred to as such by the Romans. These people, like the nomads and other tribes of Central Asia, were certainly less civilized than their neighbours in Rome or in India. But they were more vigorous, as they lived an open-air life. Later they became Christians and even when they conquered Rome they did not come, as a rule, as ruthless enemies. The modern nations of northern Europe are descended from these "barbarian" tribes—the Goths and Franks and others.

I have not given you the names of the Roman Emperors. There are crowds of them and, barring a few, they are bad enough. Some are monsters of evil. You have no doubt heard of Nero, but there were many far worse than he was. One woman, Irene, actually killed her own son, who was emperor, to become empress. This was in Constantinople.

One emperor of Rome stands out above the others. His name was Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. He is supposed to have been a philosopher and a book of his, containing his thoughts and meditations, is well worth

study. To make up for Marcus Aurelius, his son, who succeeded him, was one of the worst villains that Rome produced.

For the first three hundred years of the Roman Empire, Rome was the centre of the western world. It must have been a great city, full of mighty buildings, and people must have come to it from all over the Empire and even beyond it. Numerous ships brought dainties from distant countries—rare foods and costly stuffs. Every year, it is said, a fleet of a hundred and twenty ships went from an Egyptian port in the Red Sea to India. They went just in time to take advantage of the monsoon east winds and this helped them greatly. Usually they went to south India. They loaded their precious goods and returned, with the help again of the prevailing winds, to Egypt. From Egypt the goods were sent over land and by sea to Rome.

But all this trade was largely for the benefit of the rich. Behind the luxury of the few was the misery of the many. For over three hundred years Rome was supreme in the west, and afterwards, when Constantinople was founded, it shared supremacy with it. It is curious that during this long period it did not produce anything great in the realm of thought as ancient Greece did in a short time. Indeed Roman civilization seems to have been in many respects a pale shadow of Hellenic civilization. In one thing Romans are supposed to have given a great lead. This is law. Even now some of us have the misfortune to have to learn Roman Law as it is said to be the foundation of a great deal of law in Europe. I know I had to learn a little of it long ago.

The British Empire is often compared with the Roman Empire—usually by the English to their own great satisfaction. All empires are more or less similar. They fatten on the exploitation of the many. But there is one other strong resemblance between the Romans and the English people—they are both singularly devoid of imagination! Smug and self-satisfied, and convinced that the world was made specially for their benefit, they

go through life untroubled by doubt or difficulty. But they are an excellent people, the English, and even though we fight them and will continue to fight them, we must not forget their good qualities. Especially when their failings are so obvious in India today!

35

PARTHIA AND THE SASSANIDS

April 26, 1932

We must leave the Roman Empire and Europe now for a visit to other parts of the world. We have to see what has been happening in Asia and to carry on the story of India and of China. Other countries now appear on the horizon of known history, and we shall have to say something about them also. Indeed, as we proceed there will be so much to be said about so many places that I am likely to give up the job in despair.

In one of my letters I referred to a great defeat of the armies of the Roman Republic at the battle of Carrhæ in Parthia. I did not stop to explain about the Parthians and how they had managed to establish a State where Persia and Mesopotamia are now. You will remember that after Alexander his general Seleucus and his descendants ruled an empire from India to Asia Minor in the west. For about three hundred years they flourished till they were driven away by another of the Central Asian tribes, called the Parthians. It was these Parthians in Persia or Parthia, as it was called, that defeated the Romans during the last days of the Republic, and the Empire that came after never succeeded in defeating them utterly. For two and a half centuries they ruled Parthia till an internal revolution drove them out. The Persians themselves rose against their alien rulers and put in their place one of their own race and religion. This was Ardeshir I. His dynasty is called the Sassanid dynasty. Ardeshir was an ardent Zoroastrian, which you will remember is the religion of the Parsis, and he was not very tolerant of other religions. Between the Sassanids and the Roman Empire there was

almost constant war. They even succeeded in capturing one of the Roman emperors. On several occasions the Persian armies almost reached Constantinople; once they conquered Egypt. The Sassanid Empire is chiefly notable for its religious zeal in favour of Zoroastrianism. When Islam came in the seventh century it put an end both to the Sassanid Empire and the official religion. Many Zoroastrians preferred to leave their country because of this change and for fear of persecution, and they came to India. India, of course, welcomed them as it has welcomed all others who have come to her seeking refuge. The Parsis in India today are the descendants of these Zoroastrians.

It is curious and rather wonderful to compare other countries with India in the matter of treatment of different religions. In most places, and especially in Europe, you will find, in the past, intolerance and persecution of all who do not profess the official faith. There is compulsion almost everywhere. You will read about the terrible Inquisition in Europe, and of the burning of so-called witches. But in India, in olden times there was almost full tolerance. The slight conflict between Hinduism and Buddhism was nothing compared to the violent conflicts of religious sects in the West. It is well to remember this for, unhappily, we have had religious and communal troubles recently, and some people, ignorant of history, imagine that this has been India's fate right through the ages. This is wholly wrong. Such troubles are largely of recent growth. You will find that after Islam began, for many hundred years, Musalmans lived in all parts of India in perfect peace with their neighbours. They were welcomed when they came as traders and encouraged to settle down. But I am anticipating.

So India welcomed the Zoroastrians. A few hundred years before, India had also welcomed many Jews who fled from Rome in the first century after Christ on account of persecution.

During the period of Sassanid rule in Persia, a little

desert State flourished in Palmyra in Syria, and it had its little day of glory. Palmyra was a trading market in the middle of the Syrian desert. Great ruins, to be seen even today, tell us of its mighty buildings. At one time the ruler of the State was a woman named Zenobia. But she was defeated by the Romans and they were unchivalrous enough to take her in chains to Rome!

Syria was a pleasant land at the beginning of the Christian era. The New Testament tells us something about it. There were great towns and a dense population, in spite of misgovernment and tyranny. There were large canals and an extensive trade. But continuous fighting and misrule reduced it in six hundred years almost to a wilderness—the great towns were deserted and the old buildings were in ruins.

If you fly by aeroplane from India to Europe, you will pass over these ruins of Palmyra and Baalbak. You will see where Babylon was, and many another place, famous in history, and now no more.

36

SOUTH INDIA COLONISES

April 28, 1932

We have wandered far. Let us return to India again and try to find what our forbears in this country were doing. You will remember the borderland empire of the Kushans—a great Buddhist State including the whole of north India and a good bit of Central Asia—with its capital at Purushapura or Peshawar. You will also perhaps remember that about this period in the south of India there was a great State stretching from sea to sea—the Andhra State. For about three hundred years the Kushans and the Andhras flourished. About the middle of the third century after Christ these two empires ceased to be, and for a period India had a number of small States. Within a hundred years, however, another Chandragupta rose in Pataliputra and started a period of aggressive Hindu imperialism. But before we go on to the Guptas, as they are called, we might have a look at the beginnings of great enterprises in the south, which were to carry Indian art and culture to distant islands of the East.

You know well the shape of India, as she lies between the Himalayas and the two seas. The north is far removed from the sea. Its main pre-occupation in the past has been the land frontier, over which enemies and invaders used to come. But east and west and south we have a tremendous sea-coast and India narrows down till the east meets the west at Kanya Kumari or Cape Comorin. All these people living near the sea were naturally interested in it, and one would expect many of them to be sea-faring folk. I have told you already of the great trade which south India had from the remotest

times with the West. It is not surprising therefore to find from early times ship-building in India and people crossing the seas in search of trade, or may be adventure. Vijaya is supposed to have gone from India and conquered Ceylon about the time Gautama the Buddha lived here. In the Ajanta caves, I think, there is a representation of Vijaya crossing to Ceylon, with horses and elephants being carried across in ships. Vijaya gave the name Sinhala to the Island—"Sinhala Dweep." *Sinhala* is derived from *Sinha,* a lion, and there is an old story about a lion, current in Ceylon, which I have forgotten. I suppose the word Ceylon is derived from *Sinhala.*

The little crossing from south India to Ceylon was of course no great feat. But we have plenty of evidence of ship-building and people going across the seas from the many Indian ports which dotted the coast line from Bengal to Gujrat. Chanakya, the great minister of Chandragupta Maurya, tells us something about the navy in his *Arthashāstra*, about which I wrote to you from Naini. Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador at Chandragupta's court, also mentions it. Thus it appears that even at the beginning of the Mauryan period ship-building was a flourishing industry in India. And ships are obviously meant to be used. So quite a considerable number of people must have crossed the seas in them. It is strange and interesting to think of this and then to think of some of our people even today who are afraid of crossing the seas and think it against their religion to do so. We cannot call these people relics of the past, for as you see the past was much more sensible. Fortunately, such extraordinary notions have largely disappeared now and there are few people who are influenced by them.

The south naturally looked more to the sea than the north. Most of the foreign trade was with the south and Tamil poems are full of references to 'yavana' wines and vases and lamps. 'Yavana' was chiefly used for Greeks, but perhaps vaguely for all foreigners. The

Andhra coins of the second and third centuries bear the device of a large two-masted ship, which shows how very much interested the old Andhras must have been in ship-building and sea-trade.

It was the south, therefore, which took the lead in a great enterprise which resulted in establishing Indian colonies all over the islands in the East. These colonizing excursions started in the first century after Christ and they continued for hundreds of years. All over Malay and Java and Sumatra and Cambodia and Borneo, they went and established themselves and brought Indian culture and Indian art with them. In Burma and Siam and Indo-China there were large Indian colonies. Many even of the names they gave to their new towns and settlements were borrowed from India—Ayodhya, Hastinapur, Taxila, Gandhara. Strange how history repeats itself! The Anglo-Saxon colonists who went to America did likewise, and in the United States today the names of old English cities are repeated. Even the greatest of the American cities, New York, was named after the old city of York in the north of England.

No doubt, these Indian colonists misbehaved wherever they went as all such colonists do. They must have exploited the people of the islands and lorded it over them. But after a while the colonists and the old inhabitants must have largely mixed. It was difficult to keep up regular contacts with India. Hindu States and empires were established in these eastern islands, and then Buddhist rulers came, and between the Hindu and the Buddhist there was a tussle for mastery. It is a long and fascinating story—the history of Further or Greater India, as it is called. Mighty ruins still tell us of the great buildings and temples that adorned these Indian settlements. There were great cities, built by Indian builders and craftsmen—Kamboja, Sri Vijaya, Angkor the Magnificent, Madjapahit.

For nearly fourteen hundred years these Hindu and Buddhist States lasted in these islands, contending against each other for mastery, changing hands, occasionally

destroying each other. In the fifteenth century the Muslims finally obtained control and soon after came the Portuguese and the Spaniards, the Dutch and the English, and last of all the Americans. The Chinese, of course, had always been close neighbours, sometimes interfering and conquering; oftener living as friends and exchanging gifts; and all the time influencing them with their great culture and civilization.

These Hindu colonies of the East have many things to interest us. The most striking feature is that the colonization was evidently organized by one of the principal governments of the day in south India. At first many individual explorers must have gone; then trade developed; and later families and groups of people must have gone on their own account. It is said that the early settlers were from Kalinga (Orissa) and the eastern coast. Perhaps some people went from Bengal also. There is also a tradition that some people from Gujrat, pushed out from their own homelands, went to these islands. But these are conjectures. The principal stream of colonists went from the Pallava country—the south of the Tamil land where a great Pallava dynasty was ruling. And it was this Pallava government that seems to have organized this colonization of Malaysia. Perhaps there was pressure of population owing to people pushing down from north India. Whatever the reason may have been, settlements in widely scattered places, far from India, were deliberately planned and colonies were started in these places, almost simultaneously. These settlements were in Indo-China, Malay Peninsula, Borneo, Sumatra, Java and in other places. All these were Pallava colonies bearing Indian names. In Indo-China, the settlement was called Kamboja (the present Kambodia), a name which came all the way from a Kamboja in the Kabul Valley in Gandhara.

For four or five hundred years these settlements remained Hindu in religion; then gradually Buddhism spread all over. Much later came Islam and spread in part of Malaysia, part remaining Buddhist.

Empires and kingdoms came and went in Malaysia. But the real result of these colonizing enterprises of south India was to introduce Indo-Aryan civilization in this part of the world, and to a certain extent the people of Malaysia today are the children of the same civilization as we are. They have had other influences also, notably the Chinese, and it is interesting to observe the mixture of these two powerful influences—the Indian and the Chinese—on the different countries of Malaysia. Some have been more Indianized; in others the Chinese element is more in evidence. On the mainland, in Burma, Siam, Indo-China, the Chinese influence is predominant—but not in Malay. In the islands, Java, Sumatra and others, Indian influence is more obvious, with a recent covering of Islam.

But there was no conflict between the Indian and the Chinese influences. They were very dissimilar and yet they could work on parallel lines without difficulty. In religion, of course, India was the fountain-head, whether it was Hinduism or Buddhism. Even China owed her religion to India. In art also Indian influence was supreme in Malaysia. Even in Indo-China, where Chinese influence was great, the architecture was wholly Indian. China influenced these continental countries more in regard to their methods of government and their general philosophy of life. So that today the people of Indo-China and Burma and Siam seem to be nearer akin to the Chinese than to the Indian. Of course, racially they have more of Mongolian blood in them, and this makes them resemble, to some extent, the Chinese.

In Borobudar in Java are to be seen now the remains of great Buddhist temples built by Indian artisans. The whole story of Buddha's life is carved on the walls of these buildings, and they are a unique monument not only to the Buddha, but to the Indian art of that day.

Indian influence went further still. It reached the Philippines and even Formosa, which were both part, for a time, of the Hindu Sri Vijaya kingdom of Sumatra.

Long afterwards the Philippines were ruled by the Spainards, and now they are under American control. The United States have repeatedly promised them independence, but it is difficult to give up something one has got. Manila is the capital city of the Philippines. A new legislative building was put up there some time ago and on its façade four figures have been carved representing the sources of Philippine culture. These figures are Manu, the great law-giver of ancient India; Lao-Tse, the philosopher of China; and two figures representing Anglo-Saxon law and justice, and Spain.

37

HINDU IMPERIALISM UNDER THE GUPTAS

April 29, 1932

While men from South India were crossing the high seas and founding settlements and towns in distant places, in the north of India there was a strange ferment. The Kushan Empire had lost its strength and greatness and was becoming smaller and shrinking away. All over the north there were small States, often ruled by the descendants of the Sakas or Scythians or Turkis, who had come to India over the north-west frontier. I told you that these people were Buddhists and they came to India not as enemies to raid but to settle down here. They were pushed inexorably from behind by other tribes in Central Asia, who in their turn were often pushed away by the Chinese kingdom. On coming to India these people largely adopted Indo-Aryan customs and traditions. They looked upon India as the parent country for religion and culture and civilization. The Kushans themselves had followed Indo-Aryan traditions to a large extent. This was indeed the reason why they managed to stay in India and rule over large parts of it for such a long time. They tried to behave as Indo-Aryans. They wanted the people of the country to forget that they were aliens. They succeeded in some measure. But not quite. Among the Kshatriyas especially the feeling rankled that aliens were ruling over them. They chafed under this foreign rule and so the ferment grew and peoples' minds were troubled. Ultimately these disaffected people found a capable leader and, under his banner, they started a 'holy war,' as it is called, to free Aryavarta.

This leader was named Chandragupta. Do not mix

him up with the other Chandragupta, the grandfather of Ashoka. This man had nothing to do with the Maurya dynasty. It so happened that he was a petty Raja of Pataliputra, but the descendants of Ashoka had retired into obscurity by then. You must remember that we are now in the beginning of the fourth century after Christ, that is, about 308 A.C. This was 534 years after Ashoka's death.

Chandragupta was ambitious and capable. He set about to win over the other Aryan chiefs in the north and to form a kind of federation with them. He married Kumara Devi of the famous and powerful Lichchhavi clan and thus secured the support of this clan. Having prepared his ground carefully Chandragupta proclaimed his "holy war" against all foreign rulers in India. The Kshatriyas and the Aryan aristocracy, deprived of their power and positions by the aliens, were at the back of this war. After a dozen years of fighting, Chandragupta managed to gain control of a part of northern India, including what are known as the United Provinces now. He then crowned himself King of Kings.

Thus began what is known as the Gupta dynasty. It lasted for about two hundred years till the Huns came to trouble it. It was a period of somewhat aggressive Hinduism and nationalism. The foreign rulers—the Turkis and Parthians and other non-Aryans—were rooted out and forcibly removed. We thus find racial antagonism at work. The Indo-Aryan aristocrat was proud of his race and looked down upon these barbarians and *mlechchhas.* Indo-Aryan States and rulers who were conquered by the Guptas were dealt with leniently. But there was no leniency for the non-Aryans.

Chandragupta's son, Samudragupta, was an even more aggressive fighter than his father. He was a great general and when he became emperor, he carried on victorious campaigns all over the country, even in the South. He extended the Gupta Empire till it spread

over a great part of India. But in the south his suzerainty was nominal. In the north the Kushans were pushed back across the Indus river.

You will be interested to know that a poet of the time celebrated Samudragupta's victories in Sanskrit verse and these verses were inscribed on the Ashoka Pillar, now at Allahabad.

Samudragupta's son, Chandragupta II, was also a warrior king and he conquered Kathiawar and Gujrat, which had been under the rule of a Saka or Turki dynasty for a long time. He took the name of Vikramaditya, and by this he is usually known. But this name, like that of Cæsar, became a title of many rulers, and is therefore rather confusing.

Do you remember seeing an enormous iron pillar near the Qutub Minar in Delhi? This pillar is said to have been built by Vikramaditya as a kind of Victory Pillar. It is a fine piece of work and on the top is a lotus flower, a symbol of empire.

The Gupta period is the period of Hindu imperialism in India. There was a great revival of old Aryan culture and Sanskrit learning. The Hellenistic, or Greek, and Mongolian elements in Indian life and culture, which had been brought by the Greeks, Kushans and others, were not encouraged, and were in fact deliberately superseded by laying stress on the Indo-Aryan traditions. Sanskrit was the official court language. But even in those days Sanskrit was not the common language of the people. The spoken language was a form of Prakrit, which was nearly allied to Sanskrit. But even though Sanskrit was not the vernacular of the time, it was living enough. There was a great flowering of Sanskrit poetry and drama and of Indo-Aryan art. In the history of Sanskrit literature this period is perhaps the richest after the great days which gave the Vedas and the Epics. Kalidasa, that wonderful writer, is of this period. Unhappily many of us, and I am one of them, do not know much Sanskrit and are cut off from this rich inheritance of ours. I hope you will be

able to profit by it.

Vikramaditya is said to have had a brilliant court where he assembled the greatest writers and artists of the day. Have you not heard of the Nine Jewels of his court—the *Navaratna*? Kalidasa is said to have been one of these nine.

Samudragupta changed the capital of his empire from Pataliputra to Ayodhya. Perhaps he felt that Ayodhya offered a more suitable background for his aggressive Indo-Aryan outlook—with its story of Ramachandra immortalized in Valmiki's epic.

The Gupta revival of Aryanism and Hinduism was naturally not very favourably inclined towards Buddhism. This was partly so because this movement was aristocratic, with the Kshatriya chiefs backing it, and Buddhism had more of democracy in it; partly because the Mahayana form of Buddhism was closely associated with the Kushans and other alien rulers of north India. But there seems to have been no persecution of Buddhism. Buddhist monasteries continued and were still great educational institutions. The Guptas had friendly relations with the rulers of Ceylon, where Buddhism flourished. Meghavarna, the king of Ceylon, sent costly gifts to Samudragupta and founded a monastery at Gaya for Sinhalese students.

But Buddhism declined in India. This decline was due, as I have told you previously, not so much to outside pressure on the part of the Brahmans or the government of the day, as to the power of Hinduism to absorb it gradually.

It was about this time that one of the famous travellers from China visited India—not Hiuen Tsang, about whom I have told you, but Fa-Hien. He came as a Buddhist in search of Buddhist sacred books. He tells us that the people of Magadha were happy and prosperous; that justice was mildly administered; and there was no death penalty. Gaya was waste and desolate; Kapilavastu had become a jungle; but at Pataliputra people were "rich, prosperous and virtuous." There were

many rich and magnificent Buddhist monasteries. Along the main roads there were *dharmashālās*, where travellers could stay and were supplied with food at public expense. In the great cities there were free hospitals.

After wandering about India, Fa-Hien went to Ceylon and spent two years there. But a companion of his, Tao-Ching, liked India greatly and was so much impressed by the piety of the Buddhist monks that he decided to remain here. Fa-Hien returned by sea from Ceylon to China and after many adventures and many years' absence, he reached home.

Chandragupta the Second, or Vikramaditya, ruled for about 23 years. After him came his son, Kumaragupta, who had a long reign of forty years. The next was Skandagupta who succeeded in 453 A.C. He had to face a new terror, which ultimately broke the back of the great Gupta Empire. But of this I shall tell you in my next letter.

Some of the finest frescoes of Ajanta, as well as the halls and chapel of Ajanta, are examples of Gupta art. When you see them you will realize how wonderful they are. Unfortunately the frescoes are slowly disappearing as they cannot stand exposure for long.

It may interest you to know that the title of the wives of the Gupta emperors was *Mahādevī*. Thus Chandragupta's queen was called the Mahadevi Kumara Devi.

What was happening in other parts of the world when the Guptas held sway in India? Chandragupta the First was the contemporary of Constantine the Great, the Roman Emperor who founded Constantinople. During the times of the later Guptas, the Roman Empire split up into the Eastern and Western, and the Western was ultimately overthrown by the northern "barbarian" tribes. Thus, just about the time when the Roman Empire was weakening, India had a very powerful State with great generals and mighty armies. Samudragupta is sometimes spoken of as the

'Indian Napoleon.' But, ambitious as he was, he did not look beyond the frontiers of India for his conquests.

The Gupta period was one of aggressive imperialism and conquest and victory. But there are many such imperialistic periods in the history of every country and they have little importance in the long run. What makes the Gupta times stand out, however, and remembered with some pride in India, is the wonderful renaissance of art and literature which they witnessed.

38

THE HUNS COME TO INDIA

May 4, 1932

The new terror which descended on India across the north-western mountains was the Hun terror. I said something about the Huns in a previous letter when we were discussing the Roman Empire. In Europe their greatest leader was Attila who, for many years, terrorized over both Rome and Constantinople. Allied to these tribes were the Huns—called the White Huns—who came to India about the same time. They were also nomads from Central Asia. For a long time past they had been hovering along the Indian frontier and giving a lot of trouble to all concerned there. As their numbers grew, and perhaps because they were pushed from behind by other tribes, they undertook a regular invasion.

Skandagupta, fifth of the Gupta line, had to face this Hun invasion. He defeated them and hurled them back; but a dozen years later they came again. Gradually they spread over Gandhara and the greater part of north India. They tortured the Buddhists and committed all manner of frightfulness.

There must have been continuous warfare against them, but the Guptas could not drive them away. Fresh waves of Huns came and spread over central India. Their chief, Toroman, installed himself as king. He was bad enough. But after him came his son, Mihiragula, who was an unmitigated savage and fiendishly cruel. Kalhana in his history of Kashmir—the *Rājatarangini*—tells us that one of Mihiragula's amusements was to have elephants thrown over great precipices into the *khud!* His atrocities roused up Aryavarta at length and the

Aryas under Baladitya of the Gupta line and Yashodharman, a ruler of central India, defeated the Huns and made Mihiragula a prisoner. But, unlike the Huns, Baladitya was chivalrous, and he spared Mihiragula and told him to go away outside the country. Mihiragula took refuge in Kashmir and later treacherously attacked Baladitya who had treated him so generously.

Soon however the Hun power weakened in India. But many of the descendants of the Huns remained and gradually got mixed up with the Aryan population. It is possible that some of our Rajput clans of central India and Rajputana have a trace of this White Hun blood.

The Huns ruled north India for a very short time—less than fifty years. Afterwards they settled down peacefully. But the Hun wars and their frightfulness made a great impression on the Indian Aryans, Hun methods of life and government were very different from those of the Aryans. The Aryans were still in a large measure a freedom-loving race. Even their kings had to bow down to the popular will. Their village assemblies had great power. But the coming of the Huns and their settling down and mixing with the Indian people, made some difference to these Aryan standards and lowered them.

Baladitya was the last of the great Guptas. He died in 530 A.C. It is interesting to note that this ruler of a typical Hindu line was himself attracted towards Buddhism and his *guru* was a Buddhist monk. The Gupta period is specially known for its revival of Krishna-worship, but even so there appears to have been no marked conflict with Buddhism.

Again, we find, after the two hundred years of Gupta rule, many States rising up in the north, independent of any central authority. In the south of India, however, a great State now developes. A ruler of the name of Pulakesin, who claimed descent from Ramachandra, established an empire in the south, known as the Chalukyan Empire. These southern people must have been closely connected with the Indian colo-

nies in the eastern islands and there must have been constant traffic between these islands and India. We also learn that Indian ships frequently carried merchandise to Persia. The Chalukyan kingdom exchanged ambassadors with the Sassanids in Persia, especially with one of their great rulers, Khusrau II.

39

INDIA'S CONTROL OF FOREIGN MARKETS

May 5, 1932

Right through this old period of history, which we are considering, for more than a thousand years, we find Indian trade flourishing both in the west in Europe and western Asia, and in the east right up to China. Why was this so? Not merely because Indians in those days were good sailors and good merchants, which they certainly were; and not merely because of their skill in handicrafts, great as was this skill. All this helped. But one of the chief reasons for the control of distant markets by India seems to have been her progress in chemistry, especially in dyeing. The Indians of those days seem to have discovered special methods for the preparation of fast dyes for cloth. They also knew a special method of preparing the indigo dye from the plant. You will notice that the very name "indigo" comes from India. It is also probable that the old Indians knew how to temper steel well and thus to make fine steel weapons. You may remember my telling you that in the old Persian stories of Alexander's invasion, whenever a good sword or dagger is mentioned it is stated that it was from India.

Because India could make these dyes and other articles better than the other countries, it was natural that she should command the markets. The person or the country having a better tool, or a better or cheaper method of making any article, is bound, in the long run, to drive out another person or country which has not got as good a tool or as good a method. And this is the reason why Europe has gone ahead of Asia during the last two hundred years. New discoveries

and inventions gave Europe new and powerful tools and new methods of manufacture. With the help of these she captured the markets of the world and became rich and powerful. There were other causes too which helped her. But, for the moment, I would like you to consider how important a thing a tool is. Man, a great man once said, was a tool-making animal. And man's history, from the earliest days to the present, is a history of more and more efficient tools—from the early stone arrows and hammers of the Stone Age to the railway and steam-engine and the enormous machines of today. Indeed, almost everything we do requires a tool. Where would we be without tools?

A tool is a good thing. It helps to lighten work. But of course a tool may be misused. A saw is a useful tool. But a child may hurt itself with it. A knife is one of the most useful things you can have. Every scout must have it. And yet a foolish person may kill another with the knife. It is not the fault of the poor knife. The fault lies with the person misusing the tool.

In the same way modern machinery, good in itself, has been and is being misused in many ways. Instead of lightening the burden of work on the masses, it has often made their lot even worse than before. Instead of bringing happiness and comfort to millions of people, as it should, it has brought misery to many; and it has placed so much power in the hands of governments that they can slaughter millions in their wars.

But the fault is not that of machinery but of the misuse of it. If the big machinery was controlled not by irresponsible persons who want to make money for themselves out of it, but on behalf of and for the good of the people generally, there would be a tremendous difference.

So in those days, unlike today, India was ahead of the world in her methods of manufacture. And so Indian cloth and Indian dyes and other articles went to far countries and were eagerly sought after. To

India this trade brought wealth. Besides this trade, South India supplied pepper and other spices. These spices also came from the eastern islands and passed *via* India to the West. Pepper was greatly valued in Rome and the West. It is said that Alaric, a chief of the Goths who captured Rome in 410 A.C. took 3000 pounds of pepper from there. All this pepper must have come from or *via* India.

40

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF COUNTRIES AND CIVILIZATIONS

May 6, 1932

We have kept away from China for a long time now. Let us go to it again and carry on our tale, and see what was happening to it when Rome was falling in the West, and India was having a national revival under the Guptas. The rise or fall of Rome affected China very little. They were too far removed from each other. But I have already told you that the driving back of the Central Asian tribes by the Chinese State sometimes had disastrous consequences for Europe and India. These tribes, or others whom they pushed, went west and south. They upset kingdoms and States and created confusion. Many settled down in eastern Europe and in India.

There were of course direct contacts between Rome and China and embassies were exchanged. The earliest of such embassies mentioned in the Chinese books is said to have come from the Emperor An-Tun of Rome in 166 A.C. This An-Tun is no other than Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, whom I mentioned in one of my letters to you.

The fall of Rome in Europe was a mighty thing. It was not merely the fall of a city or the fall of an empire. In a way the Roman Empire continued at Constantinople for long afterwards, and the ghost of the Empire hovered all over Europe for fourteen hundred years or so. But the fall of Rome was the end of a great period. It was the end of the ancient world of Greece and Rome. A new world, a new culture and civilization were rising in the West on the ruins of

Rome. We are misled by words and phrases and because we find the same words used, we are apt to think that they mean the same thing. After Rome fell western Europe continued to talk in the language of Rome, but behind that language were different ideas and different meanings. People say that the countries of Europe today are the children of Greece and Rome. And this is true to some extent. But still this is a misleading statement. For the countries of Europe represent something quite different from what Greece and Rome stood for. The old world of Rome and Greece collapsed almost completely. The civilization that had been built up in a thousand years or more ran to seed and decayed. It was then that the semi-civilized, half-barbarous countries of western Europe appear on the page of history and build up slowly a new culture and civilization. They learned much from Rome; they borrowed from the old world. But the process of learning was difficult and laborious. For hundreds of years culture and civilization seemed to have gone to sleep in Europe. There was the darkness of ignorance and bigotry. These centuries have therefore been called the Dark Ages.

Why was this so? Why should the world go back; and why should the knowledge accumulated through hundreds of years of labour disappear, or be forgotten? These are big questions which trouble the wisest of us. I shall not attempt to answer them. Is it not strange that India which was great in thought and action should fall so miserably and for long periods should remain a slave country? Or China, with her splendid past, be a prey to interminable fighting? Perhaps the knowledge and the wisdom of the ages, which man has gathered together bit by bit, do not disappear. But somehow our eyes close and we cannot see at times. The window is shut and there is darkness. But outside and all round is the light, and if we keep our eyes or our windows shut, it does not mean that the light has disappeared.

Some people say that the Dark Ages in Europe were due to Christianity—not the religion of Jesus, but the official Christianity which flourished in the West after Constantine, the Roman Emperor, adopted it. Indeed, these people say, that the adoption of Christianity by Constantine in the fourth century "inaugurated a millennium" (that is, a thousand years) "in which reason was enchained, thought was enslaved, and knowledge made no progress." Not only did it bring persecution and bigotry and intolerance, but it made it difficult for people to make progress in science or in most other ways. Sacred books often become obstacles to progress. They tell us what the world was like at the time they were written; they tell us the ideas of that period, and its customs. No one dare challenge those ideas or those customs because they are written in a 'sacred' book. So, although the world may change tremendously, we are not allowed to change our ideas and customs to fit in with the changed conditions. The result is that we become misfits and of course there is trouble.

Some people therefore accuse Christianity of having brought this period of darkness over Europe. Others tell us that it was Christianity and Christian monks and priests who kept the lamp of learning alight during the Dark Ages. They kept up art and painting and valuable books were carefully preserved and copied by them.

So people argue. Perhaps both are right. But it would be ridiculous to say that Christianity is responsible for all the evils that followed the fall of Rome. Indeed Rome fell because of these evils.

I have wandered far. What I wanted to point out to you was that while in Europe there was a sudden social collapse and a sudden change, there was no such sudden change in China or even in India. In Europe we see the end of a civilization and the early beginnings of another which was to develop slowly into what it is today. In China we see the same high degree of cul-

ture and civilization continuing without any such break. There are ups and downs. Good periods and bad kings and emperors come and go, and dynasties change. But the cultural inheritance does not break. Even when China splits up into several States and there is mutual conflict, art and literature flourish, lovely paintings are made and beautiful vases and fine buildings. Printing comes into use, and tea drinking comes into fashion and is celebrated in poetry! There is a continuing grace and artistry in China which can come alone from a high civilization.

So also in India. There is no sudden break as in Rome. Certainly there are bad times and good. Periods of fine literary and artistic production, and periods of destruction and decay. But civilization continues, after a fashion. It spreads from India to the other countries of the east. It absorbs and teaches even the barbarians who come to plunder.

Do not think that I am trying to praise up India or China at the expense of the West. There is nothing to shout about in the condition of India or China today, and even the blind can see that with all their past greatness, they have sunk low in the scale of nations. If there was no sudden break with their past culture, this does not mean that there has been no change for the worse. If we were up and we are down, obviously we have come down in the world. We may feel pleased at the continuity of our civilization, but that is small comfort when that civilization itself might have run to seed. Perhaps it might have been better for us if we had had sudden breaks with the past. This might have shaken us up and given new life and vitality. It may be that the events that are happening in India and the world today are giving this shaking to our old country and filling her with youth and new life again.

The strength and perseverance of India in the past seems to have lain in her wide-spread system of village republics or self-governing *panchayats*. There were no big landlords and no big zamindars, as we have today.

Land belonged to the village community or *panchayat* or to the peasants who worked on it. And these *panchayats* had a great deal of power and authority. They must have been elected by the village folk and thus there was a basis of democracy in this system. Kings came and went, or quarrelled with each other, but they did not touch or interfere with this village system or venture to take away from the liberties of the *panchayats*. And so while empires changed, the social fabric which was based on the village system continued without great change. We are apt to be misled by the accounts of invasions and fighting and change of rulers into thinking that the whole population was affected by them. Of course, populations were sometimes affected, especially in the north of India, but on the whole it may be said, that they worried little and carried on inspite of changes at the top.

Another factor that strengthened the social system in India for long was the caste system as it originally existed. Caste then was not so rigid as it became later; nor did it depend on birth alone. It held Indian life together for thousands of years, and it could only do so not by preventing change or growth, but by allowing this to take place. The old Indian outlook in religion and life was always one of tolerance and experiment and change. That gave it strength. Gradually, however, repeated invasions and other troubles made caste rigid and with it the whole Indian outlook became more rigid and unyielding. This process went on till the Indian people were reduced to their present miserable condition, and caste became the enemy of every kind of progress. Instead of holding together the social structure, it splits it up into hundreds of divisions and makes us weak and turns brother against brother.

Thus caste helped in the past in strengthening India's social system. But even so it had the seeds of decay in it. It was based on perpetuating inequality and injustice and any such attempt was bound to fail in the end. No sound and stable society can be built

up on the basis of inequality and injustice, or on the exploitation of one class or group by another. Because today there is still this unfair exploitation, we see so much trouble and unhappiness all over the world. But everywhere people have come to realize this and are working hard to get rid of it.

As in India so also in China, the strength of the social system lay in the villages, and the hundreds of thousands of peasants who owned and tilled the land. There also there were no big zamindars. And religion was never permitted to dogmatize or to become intolerant. Of all the people in the world perhaps the Chinese have been and still are the least bigoted in the matter of religion.

Again, you will remember that both in India and China there was no such labour slavery as in Greece or Rome, or earlier still in Egypt. There were some domestic servants who were slaves but they made little difference to the social system. This system would have gone on in the same way without them. Not so in ancient Greece or Rome, where the large numbers of slaves were an essential part of the system, and the real burden of all work lay on them. And in Egypt, where would the great pyramids have been but for this slave labour?

I began this letter with China and I intended to carry on her story. But I have drifted to other subjects, not an unusual thing for me! Perhaps next time we may stick to China.

41

CHINA FLOURISHES UNDER THE TANGS

May 7, 1932

I have told you of the Han dynasty in China; and of the coming of Buddhism; and of the invention of printing; and the introduction of the examination system for choosing public officers. In the third century after Christ the Han dynasty ends and the empire is divided up into three States. This period of division into "The Three Kingdoms," as they are called, lasts for several hundred years, till China is reunited again and made into a powerful single State by a new dynasty, called the Tang Dynasty. This was early in the seventh century.

But even during this period of division Chinese culture and art continued inspite of Tartar attacks from the north. We are told of large libraries and of fine paintings. India continued to export not only her fine cloth and other goods, but her thought and religion and art. Many Buddhist missionaries went to China from India and they carried with them the traditions of Indian art. It may be that Indian artists and master-craftsmen also went. The coming of Buddhism and of new ideas from India had a great effect on China. China of course was and had been a highly civilized country. It was not as if the religion or thought or art of India went to a backward country and took possession of it. In China this had to come up against China's old art and ways of thought. The result of the impact of these two was to produce something different from either—something with much of India in it but still essentially Chinese and moulded according to the Chinese pattern. Thus the coming of these thought currents

from India gave an impetus and a kick to the artistic and mental life of China.

In the same way the message of Buddhism and of Indian art went further east to Korea and Japan, and it is interesting to see how these countries were affected by it. Each country adapted it to suit its own particular genius. Thus although Buddhism flourishes in China and Japan, it bears a different aspect in each country; and both these perhaps differ in many ways from the Buddhism that went out from India. Art also varies and changes with the skies and with the people. In India we have now, as a people, forgotten art and beauty. Not only have we not produced anything of great beauty for long, but most of us have even forgotten how to appreciate the beautiful. How can beauty and art flourish in a country which is not free? They wither away in the darkness of subjection and restraint. But already, with the vision of freedom before us, our sense of beauty is slowly waking up. When freedom comes you will see a great revival of art and beauty in this country, and I hope this will sweep away the ugliness of our homes and our cities and our lives.

China and Japan have been more fortunate than India and they have preserved still a great deal of their sense of beauty and artistry.

As Buddhism spread in China more and more Indian Buddhists and monks went there, and Chinese monks travelled to India and to other countries. I have told you of Fa-Hien. You know also of Huien Tsang. Both of these came to India. There is a very interesting report of the journey of a Chinese monk named Hui Sheng across the eastern seas. He came to the capital of China in 499 A.C. and said that he had visited a land, which he called Fu Sang, several thousand miles east of China. East of China and Japan there is the Pacific Ocean, and it is possible that Hui Sheng had crossed this ocean. Perhaps he visited Mexico, for in Mexico there was even then an old civilization.

Attracted by the spread of Buddhism in China, the head and patriarch of Indian Buddhism sailed from South India for Canton in China. His name or title was Bodhidharma. Perhaps the gradual weakening of Buddhism in India induced him to go. He was an old man when he went in 526 A.C. With him and after him went many other monks to China. It is said that in one province of China alone—Lo-Yang—there were at this time more than 3000 Indian monks and ten thousand Indian families.

Buddhism had another period of revival in India soon after, and as the birthplace of the Buddha and the place where the sacred writings were, India continued to attract pious Buddhists. But the glory seems to have departed from Buddhism in India, and China now becomes the leading Buddhist country.

The Tang dynasty was started by the Emperor Kao Tsu in 618 A.C. Not only did he unite the whole of China, but he spread his authority over an immense area—over Annam and Cambodia in the south and right up to Persia and the Caspian Sea in the west. Part of Korea was also included in this mighty empire. The capital of the Empire was Si-an-Fu, a city which was famous in east Asia for its splendour and culture. Embassies and commissions came to it from Japan and south Korea, which was still free, to study its arts, philosophy and civilization.

The Tang Emperors encouraged foreign trade and foreign visitors. Special laws were made for the foreigners who settled or came to China, so that they might be judged according to their own customs wherever possible. We find especially the Arabs settling down in south China, near Canton, about 300 A.C. This was before Islam came, that is before the birth of the Prophet Mohammed.

With the help of these Arabs an over-seas trade developed and was carried in Arab as well as Chinese ships.

You will be surprised to learn that the census, that

is the counting of people in a country so that its population may be known, is a very old institution in China. As long ago as 156 A.C. it is said that a census took place. This must have been during the time of the Hans. The counting used to be by families and not by individuals. Each family was roughly supposed to have five persons in it. According to this reckoning China had a population of about fifty millions in A.C. 156. This is not a very accurate method, of course, but just think that this census is quite a new thing in the West. I believe the first census was held in the United States of America about 150 years ago.

In the early days of the Tangs, two other religions appeared in China—Christianity and Islam. Christianity was brought by a sect which had been declared heretic and driven away from the West. They were called Nestorians. I wrote to you some time ago of the disputes and fights between Christian sects. It was as a result of one of these disputes that the Nestorians were driven away by Rome. But they spread in China and Persia and in many other parts of Asia. They came to India also and had some success. But later other branches of Christianity and Islam swallowed up the Nestorians and there is little trace of them left. But I was greatly surprised to find a small colony of them at a place in South India which we visited last year. Do you remember? Their bishop entertained us to tea. He was a delightful old man.

It took some time for Christianity to reach China. But Islam came more swiftly. It came indeed a few years before the Nestorians and during the life-time of its Prophet. The Chinese Emperor received both the embassies—Islamic and Nestorian—with courtesy and listened to what they had to say. He appreciated it and showed favour impartially. The Arabs were permitted to build a mosque in Canton. This mosque still exists although it is thirteen hundred years old. It is one of the oldest mosques in the world.

So also the Tang Emperor permitted the building

of a Christian church and monastery. The contrast between this tolerant attitude and the intolerance of Europe in those days is very marked.

It is said that the Arabs learnt the art of making paper from the Chinese and then taught it to Europe. In 751 A.C. there was a battle in Turkestan in Central Asia between the Chinese and the Muslim Arabs. The Arabs made several Chinese prisoners, and these prisoners taught them how to make paper.

The Tangs lasted for three hundred years, till 907 A.C. These three hundred years are said by some to be China's greatest period, when there was not only a high level of culture but a high level of general happiness for the people. Many things that the West got to know much later, the Chinese knew then. Paper I have already mentioned. Gun-powder was another. They were good engineers. Generally, and in almost every particular, they were far in advance of Europe. If they were so far ahead then why could they not keep ahead and lead Europe in science and discovery? But Europe gradually crept up to them, like a youth overtaking an elderly person, and was soon ahead in some respects at any rate. Why this kind of thing happens in the history of nations is a most difficult question for philosophers to ponder over. As you are not yet a philosopher who will worry about this question, I need not worry either.

The greatness of China during this period had naturally great influence over the rest of Asia, which looked up to China for guidance in art and civilization. India's star was not shining very brightly after the Gupta Empire. As usual, however, progress and civilization in China led to too much luxury and easy living. Then there was corruption in the State, and this made heavy taxation necessary. And so the people got fed up with the Tangs and put an end to their dynasty.

42

CHOSEN AND DAI NIPPON

May 8, 1932

As we proceed with our story of the world, more and more countries will come into our ken. So we must now have a look at Korea and Japan, close neighbours of China and, in many ways, children of Chinese civilization. They are at the extreme end of Asia—the Far East—and beyond is the great Pacific Ocean. Till recent years there was of course no contact with the American continent. So their sole contacts were with the great nation on the mainland—China. From China and through China they got their religion and art and civilization. The debt of both Korea and Japan to China is tremendous; and something they owe also to India. But whatever of India they got was through China and coloured by the Chinese spirit.

Situated as they are, both Korea and Japan had little to do with big events in Asia or elsewhere. They were far from the centre of things, and, to some extent, they were fortunate, especially Japan. We may therefore almost ignore their history, till recent times, without any great difficulty. This would not make much difference to our understanding events in the rest of Asia. But we need not ignore it, just as we are not ignoring the past story of Malaysia and the eastern islands. Korea, poor little country, is almost forgotten today. Japan has swallowed her up and made her part of her empire. But Korea dreams still of freedom and struggles for independence. Japan is very much in evidence now and the newspapers are full of her attacks on China. As I write there is something like a war going on in Manchuria. So it is as well if we

know something of the past of Korea and Japan. It helps us sometimes to understand the present.

The first thing to remember is their isolation for long periods. Japan, indeed, has a remarkable record of isolation and freedom from invasion. In the whole course of her history there have been few attempts at invading her and no success has attended them. All her troubles, till recently, have been her own internal troubles. For a period, Japan even cut herself off from the rest of the world completely. It was hardly possible for a Japanese to go out of the country or for a foreigner, even a Chinaman, to go in. This was done to protect themselves from foreigners from Europe and Christian missionaries. It was a dangerous and foolish thing to do, for it meant putting the whole nation in prison and cutting it off from all outside influences, good or bad. And then suddenly Japan threw open her doors and her windows and rushed out to learn everything that Europe had to teach. And it learnt this with such right goodwill that within a generation or two she had become outwardly like any European country, and had even copied all their bad habits! All this took place within the last seventy years or so.

Korean history begins long after Chinese, and Japanese history begins long after Korean. I told you in one of my letters last year how a Chinese exile named Ki-Tse, not approving of a change of dynasty in China, marched east with 5000 followers. He settled down in Korea, calling it 'Chosen'—the Land of the Morning Calm. This was in 1122 B.C. Ki-Tse brought with him Chinese arts and crafts, agriculture and silk-making. For over nine hundred years Ki-Tse's descendants ruled Chosen. Chinese immigrants used to come from time to time and settle down in Chosen. There was fairly close contact with China.

A big batch of Chinese came when Shih Huang Ti was emperor in China. You will perhaps remember this Chinese emperor. He is the man who called himself "First Emperor" and had all old books burnt. He

was a contemporary of Ashoka. Driven away by Shih Huang Ti's ruthless methods, many Chinese took refuge in Korea. They drove away the feeble descendants of Ki-Tse. After this, Chosen was divided up into several States for over eight hundred years. These States often quarrelled with each other. Once, one of these States asked China for help—a dangerous request to make. The help came but it refused to go back! That is the way of powerful countries. China stayed on and added part of Chosen to her empire. Even the rest of Chosen, for some hundreds of years, acknowledged the suzerainty of the Tang Emperors in China.

It was in 935 A.C. that Chosen became a united independent kingdom. Wang Kien was the man who succeeded in establishing this and for four hundred and fifty years his successors managed to rule this kingdom.

In two or three paragraphs I have given you more than two thousand years of Korean history! What is worth remembering is Korea's great debt to China. Writing came from China. For a thousand years they used the Chinese characters, which you will remember, represent ideas and words and phrases and not letters. Then they developed out of this a special alphabet more suitable to their own language.

Buddhism came *via* China, and the Confucian philosophy also came from China. Artistic influences from India travelled through China to Korea and Japan. Korea produced beautiful works of art, especially of sculpture. The architecture resembled the Chinese. Great progress was also made in ship-building. Indeed at one time the people of Korea had a powerful navy with which they invaded Japan.

Probably the ancestors of the present Japanese came from Korea or Chosen. Some of them may have come from the south, from Malaysia. As you know the Japanese are a Mongolian race. There are still some people in Japan, called the Ainus, who are supposed to be the original inhabitants of the country. These people are fair and rather hairy, quite different from

the average Japanese. The Ainus have been driven to the north part of the islands.

About 200 A.C. we find that a certain Empress Jingo was head of Yamato State. Yamato was the original name of Japan, or that part of it where these immigrants had settled. Note the name of this lady—Jingo. It is a curious coincidence that this should be the name of one of the earliest Japanese rulers. The word 'Jingo' has come to have a definite meaning in English. It means a blustering and bumptious imperialist, or we might say just simply an imperialist, for every such person is bound to be to some extent blustering and bumptious—like many of the English today. Japan is supposed to suffer also from this disease of imperialism or Jingoism, and in recent years she has misbehaved greatly towards Korea and China. So it is curious that Jingo should have been the name of her first historical ruler.

Yamato kept up close relations with Korea and it was through Korea that Yamato received Chinese civilization. The Chinese written language also came about 400 A.C. through Korea. So also came Buddhism. In 552 A.C. the ruler of Pakche (which was then one of the three kingdoms into which Korea was divided) sent the ruler of Yamato a golden image of Buddha and Buddhist missionaries with their scriptures.

The old religion of Japan was Shinto. This is a Chinese word meaning "The way of the Gods." It was a mixture of nature-worship and ancestor-worship. It did not trouble itself much with the future life or with mysteries and problems. It was the religion of a race of warriors. The Japanese, so near to the Chinese and so much in their debt for their civilization, are yet utterly different from the Chinese. The Chinese have been and are an essentially peaceful people. The whole of their civilization and philosophy of life is peaceful. The Japanese, on the other hand, have been and still are a fighting people. The chief virtue of a soldier is loyalty to his head and to his comrade. This has been

a virtue of the Japanese and much of their strength is due to this. Shinto taught this virtue—"Honour the Gods and be loyal to their descendants"—and so Shinto has survived to this day in Japan and exists alongside with Buddhism.

But is this a virtue? To be loyal to a comrade or to a cause is certainly a virtue? But Shinto and other religions have often tried to exploit our loyalties so as to benefit a group of people who rule over us. The worship of authority, that is what they have taught in Japan and in Rome and elsewhere, and you will see later how much harm this has done us.

There was some conflict between the new Buddhism, when it came, and the old Shinto. But soon they settled down side by side, and so they have continued till now. Shinto is still the more popular of the two, and it is encouraged by the ruling classes because it teaches obedience and loyalty to them! Buddhism is a slightly more dangerous religion, for the founder himself was a rebel.

The artistic history of Japan begins with Buddhism. Japan or Yamato also began then to develop direct contacts with China. There were constant embassies to China, especially during the Tang period, when the new capital Si-an-fu was famous all over eastern Asia. Indeed, the Japanese, or the people of Yamato, themselves established a new capital, called Nara, and tried to make this an exact copy of Si-an-fu. The Japanese always seem to have had an amazing capacity for copying and imitating others.

Right through Japanese history one finds great families opposing each other and struggling for power. Elsewhere too you will find it in the old days. In these families the old clan idea persists. So Japanese history is the story chiefly of the rivalries of families. Their emperor, the Mikado, is supposed to be all-powerful, an autocrat and semi-divine, descended from the Sun! Shinto and ancestor-worship have helped to make the people accept the autocracy of the emperor and made

them obedient to the big people of the land. But the emperor himself has very often in Japan been a puppet without any real power. The power and authority was with some great family or clan who were the king-makers and made kings and emperors of their choice.

The first great Japanese family that seems to control the State was the Soga family. It was their adoption of Buddhism that made of this a court and official religion. One of their leaders, Shotuku Taishi, is one of the greatest men in Japanese history. He was a sincere Buddhist and an artist of great ability. He got his ideas from the Chinese Confucian classics, and tried to build up the government on a moral foundation and not just by force. Japan was then full of clans whose chiefs were almost independent. They fought each other and obeyed no authority. The emperor, in spite of his high-sounding title, was just a big clan chief. Shotuku Taishi set about changing this and making the central government strong. He made the various clan chiefs and nobles 'vassals' or subordinates to the emperor. This was about 600 A.C.

But after Shotuku Taishi's death the Soga family was driven away. A little later, another man very famous in Japanese history comes on the scene. His name was Kakatomi no Kamatori. He made all manner of changes in the government and copied many Chinese methods of government. But he did not imitate the examination system of appointing public officials, which was peculiar to China. The emperor now becomes something much more than a clan chief and the central government becomes strong.

It was during this period that Nara became the capital. But this was only for a short time. Kyoto was made capital in 794 A.C., and for nearly eleven hundred years it remained so, till it was displaced, only a short while ago, by Tokio. Tokio is a great big modern city. But it is Kyoto which tells us something of the soul of Japan, and which carries about her the memories of a thousand years.

Kakatomi no Kamatori became the founder of the Fujiwara family which was to play a great role in Japanese history. For two hundred years they ruled, making the emperors mere puppets and forcing them often to marry their women-folk. Afraid of able men in other families, they forced them to enter monasteries!

When the capital was at Nara the Chinese emperor sent a message to the Japanese ruler addressing him as the Emperor of Tai-Nyih-Pung-Kok, which means "Great-Sun-Rise-Kingdom." The Japanese rather liked this name. It sounded much more imposing than Yamato. So they began calling their counrty "Dai Nippon"—"the Land of the Rising Sun." This is still their own name for Japan. The name Japan itself came in a curious way from Nippon. Six hundred years later a great Italian traveller visited China. His name was Marco Polo. He never went to Japan, but he wrote about it in his book of travels. He had heard the name Nyih-Pung-Kok. He wrote this as 'Chipango' in his book. From this came the word Japan.

Have I told you, or do you know, how our country came to be called India and Hindustan? Both names come from the river Indus or Sindhu, which thus becomes *the* river of India. From Sindhu the Greeks called our country Indos, and from this came India. Also from Sindhu, the Persians got Hindu and from that came Hindustan.

43

HARSHA-VARDHANA AND HIUEN TSANG

May 11, 1932

We shall go back to India again. The Huns have been defeated and driven back, but many remain in odd corners. The great Gupta dynasty fades away after Baladitya, and there are many kingdoms and States in northern India. In the south Pulakesin has established the Chalukyan Empire.

Not far from Cawnpore is the little town of Kanauj. Cawnpore is now a big city, but an ugly one with its factories and chimnies, and Kanauj is a modest place, hardly bigger than a village. But in the days of which I speak, Kanauj was a great capital, famous for its poets and artists and philosophers, and Cawnpore was still unborn, and was to remain unborn for many hundreds of years.

Kanauj is the modern name. The real name is Kanya-Kubja—the "hunch-backed girl." The story is that some ancient sage or *rishi*, made angry at a fancied slight, cursed the hundred daughters of a king and made them hunch-backed! And since then the city where they lived was called the "City of Hunch-backed Girls"—Kanya-Kubja.

But we shall call it Kanauj for short. The Huns killed the Raja of Kanauj and made his wife Rajashri a prisoner. Thereupon Rajashri's brother Raja-Vardhana came to fight the Huns and rescue his sister. He defeated them but was treacherously killed. The younger brother, Harsha-Vardhana, now went out to search for his sister Rajashri. The poor girl had managed to escape to the mountains and, overcome by her sufferings, had decided to end her life. It is said

that she was on the point of becoming a *sati* when Harsha found her and saved her from this.

Having found and rescued his sister, the next thing Harsha did was to punish the petty raja who had killed his brother treacherously. Not only did he punish him but he succeeded in conquering the whole of north India, from sea to sea, and upto the Vindhya Mountains in the south. Beyond the Vindhyas was the Chalukyan Empire and Harsha was stopped by this.

Harsha-Vardhana made Kanauj his capital. Being himself a poet and dramatist he gathered round himself a host of poets and artists, and Kanauj became a famous city. Harsha was a keen Buddhist. Buddhism, as a separate faith, had weakened greatly in India; it was being swallowed up by the Brahmans. Harsha appears to have been the last great Buddhist sovereign in India.

It was during Harsha's reign that our old friend, Hiuen Tsang,* came to India, and the book of his travels that he wrote on his return tells us a lot about India and the countries of Central Asia which he crossed on his way to India. He was a pious Buddhist and he came to visit the sacred places of Buddhism and to take with him the scriptures of the faith. Right across the desert of Gobi he came, visiting many a famous city on the way—Tashkand and Samarkand and Balkh and Khotan and Yarkand. All over India he travelled, perhaps even visiting Ceylon. His book is a strange and fascinating jumble of accurate observations of the countries he visited, wonderful character-sketches of peoples in different parts of India, which seem true even today, fantastic stories which he heard, and numerous miracle stories of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. One of his delightful stories, about the Very Wise Man who went about with copper-plates round his belly, I have already told you.

*Hiuen Tsang's name is also spelt Yuen Chang or Yuan Chwang or Hsuan-tsang.

Many years he spent in India, especially in the great university of Nalanda, which was not far from Pataliputra. Nalanda, which was a monastery and university combined, is said to have had as many as ten thousand students and monks in residence. It was the great centre of Buddhist learning, a rival to Benares, which was the stronghold of Brahman learning.

I told you once that India was known of old as the Land of the Moon—Indu-land! Hiuen Tsang also tells us about this and describes how suitable the name is. Apparently even in Chinese In-Tu is the name for the moon. So it is quite easy for you to adopt a Chinese name!*

Hiuen Tsang came to India in 629 A.C. He was 26 years old when he started on his journey from China. An old Chinese record tells us that he was handsome and tall. "His colouring was delicate, his eyes brilliant. His bearing was grave and majestic, and his features seemed to radiate charm and brightness.........He had the majesty of the great waters that surround the earth, the serenity and brilliance of the lotus that rises from the midst of the waters."

Alone, in the saffron garb of the Buddhist *bhikshu*, he started on his mighty journey even though the Chinese emperor had refused his permission. He crossed the Gobi desert, barely surviving, and reached the kingdom of Turfan, that stood on the very edge of this desert. A strange little oasis of culture was this desert kingdom. It is a dead place now where archæologists and antiquarians dig for old remains. But in the seventh century, when Hiuen Tsang passed through it, it was full of life and a high culture. And this culture was a remarkable combination of India, China, Persia and even bits of Europe. Buddhism flourished and Indian influence through Sanskrit was marked; and yet the ways of life were borrowed largely from China

*Indira's pet name is Indu.

and Persia. Their language was not Mongolian, as one might expect, but Indo-European resembling in many ways the Celtic languages of Europe. And, stranger still on their frescoes in stone appear figures that are similar to European types. Very beautiful are these frescoes with their Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and gods and goddesses. The goddesses often have Indian draperies or Grecian head-dresses and draperies, presenting, so says the French critic M. Grousset, "the happiest combination of Hindu suppleness, Hellenic eloquence, and Chinese charm."

Turfan still exists and you can find it in the map. But it is a place of little importance. How wonderful it is that in the far off seventh century, rich streams of culture should have flown from distant regions to meet here and unite to form a harmonious synthesis!

From Turfan the pilgrim Hiuen Tsang went on to Kucha, yet another famous centre of Central Asia then, with a rich and brilliant civilization, known especially for the fame of its musicians and the charm of its women. Its religion and art came from India; Iran contributed to its culture and to its merchandise; and its language is related to Sanskrit, old Persian, Latin and Celtic. Another fascinating mixture!

And so Hiuen Tsang travelled on through the lands of the Turks from where the Great Khan, who was a Buddhist, exercised dominion over the greater part of Central Asia; to Samarkand which was already then an ancient city with memories of Alexander who had passed by it nearly a thousand years earlier; to Balkh; and then the valley of the Kabul river, and Kashmir and India.

These were the early days of the Tang dynasty in China, when Si-an-fu their capital was a centre of art and learning, and China led the world in civilization. You must remember, therefore, that Hiuen Tsang came from this highly civilized country and his standards of comparison must have been high. His testimony about Indian conditions is thus important and valuable. He praises the Indian people and the

administration. "With respect to the ordinary people," he says, "although they are naturally light-minded, yet they are upright and honourable. In money matters they are without craft, and in administering justice they are considerate........They are not deceitful or treacherous in their conduct, and are faithful in their oaths and promises. In their rules of government there is remarkable rectitude, whilst in their behaviour there is much gentleness and sweetness. With respect to criminals or rebels, there are few in number, and only occasionally troublesome."

He further says: "As the administration of the government is founded on benign principles, the executive is simple.............People are not subject to forced labour." "In this way taxes on people are light and the personal service required of them is moderate. Each one keeps his own wordly goods in peace, and all till the ground for their subsistence. Those who cultivate the royal estates pay a sixth part of the produce as tribute. The merchants who engage in commerce come and go in carrying out their transactions, and so on."

The education of the people was organized and began early. After the primer had been learnt, the boy or girl was supposed to begin the study of the five Shastras at the age of seven. 'Shastras' are now supposed to mean purely religious books, but in those days they meant knowledge of all kinds. Thus the five Shastras were: 1. Grammar, 2. Science of arts and crafts, 3. Medicine, 4. Logic, 5. Philosophy. The study of these subjects went on in the universities and was usually completed at the age of thirty! I suppose not very many people could go on upto that age. But it appears that primary education was comparatively widespread, as all the monks and priests were the teachers and there was no lack of them. Hiuen Tsang was much struck by the love of learning of the Indian people and right through his book he refers to this.

Hiuen gives us a description of the great Kumbh

Mela at Prayag. When you see this *mela* again, think of Hiuen Tsang's visit to it thirteen hundred years ago, and remember that even then it was an old *mela* coming right down from the Vedic times. Compared to this ancient one, of hoary lineage, our city of Allahabad is but of yesterday. It was founded by Akbar less than four hundred years ago. Far older was Prayag but older still is that attraction which, for thousands of years, has drawn millions year after year to the meeting-place of the Ganga and the Jumna.

Hiuen Tsang tells us how Harsha, though a Buddhist, went to this typical Hindu festival. On his behalf an imperial decree invited all the poor and needy of the "Five Indies" to come and be his guests at the *mela*. It was a brave invitation, even for an emperor. Needless to say, many came; and a hundred thousand are said to have fed daily as Harsha's guests! At this *mela* every five years Harsha used to distribute all the surplus of his treasury—gold, jewellery, silk, indeed everything he had. He even gave away his crown and rich clothing and took from his sister Rajashri a common garment which had already been worn.

As a pious Buddhist, Harsha stopped the killing of animals for food. This was probably not objected to much by the Brahmans as they had taken more and more to vegetarianism since Buddha's coming.

There is a little tit-bit of information in Hiuen's book which might interest you. He tells us that when a person fell ill in India he immediately fasted for seven days. Most people recovered during this fast. But if the illness continued, then they took medicine. Illness could not have been popular in those days, nor would doctors be much in demand!

A striking feature of India in those days was the great deference and respect shown by rulers and military men to learned and cultured people. In India and in China a deliberate attempt was made, and with great success, to give the place of honour to learning and culture, and not to brute force or riches.

After spending many years in India Hiuen Tsang journeyed back home, crossing again the northern mountains. He was nearly drowned in the Indus and many of his valuable books were washed away. But still he managed to take a large number of manuscripts, and the translation of these into Chinese kept him busy for many years. He was welcomed back with great warmth by the Tang Emperor at Si-an-fu, and it was this emperor who made him write the account of his travels.

Hiuen tells us of the Turks he met in Central Asia—this new tribe which in later years was to go west and upset many a kingdom. He tells us of Buddhist monasteries all over Central Asia. Indeed, Buddhist monasteries were to be found in Persia, Iraq or Mesopotamia, Khorasan, Mosul—right up to the frontiers of Syria. Of the Persian people, Hiuen tells us that they "care not for learning, but give themselves entirely to works of art. All they make the neighbouring countries value very much."

Wonderful travellers there were in those days! Even the journeys to the heart of Africa or the North or South Pole now seem feeble compared with the giant journeys of old. For years they moved on and on, across mountains and deserts, and cut off completely from all friends. Sometimes, perhaps, they felt a little home-sick, but they are much too dignified to say so. One of these travellers, however, lets us have a glimpse into his mind as, standing in a distant land, he thought of home and hungered for it. His name was Sung-Yun and he came to India a hundred years before Hiuen Tsang. He was in the mountain country in Gandhara, north-west of India. He tells us that "the gentle breeze which fanned the air, the songs of the birds, the trees in their spring tide beauty, the butterflies that fluttered over the numerous flowers, all this caused Sung-Yun, as he gazed on this lovely scenery in a distant land, to revert to home thoughts; and so melancholy were his reflections, that he brought on a severe attack of illness!"

44

SOUTH INDIA PRODUCES MANY KINGS AND WARRIORS AND A GREAT MAN

May 13, 1932

King Harsha died in 648 A.C. But even before his death a little cloud appeared on the north-west frontier of India, in Baluchistan—a cloud which was the fore-runner of a mighty storm that was breaking in western Asia, north Africa and south Europe. A new prophet had arisen in Arabia and Mohammad was his name; and he had preached a new religion called Islam. Fired with zeal for their new faith, and full of confidence in themselves, the Arabs dashed across continents, conquering as they went. It was an amazing feat and we must examine this new force which came into the world and made so much difference to it. But before we consider it, we must pay a visit to south India and try to make out what it was like in those days. The Muslim Arabs reached Baluchistan in Harsha's time, and soon after they took possession of Sind. But there they stayed and for another three hundred years there was no further Muslim invasion of India. And when this invasion came it was not the doing of the Arabs, but of some of the Central Asian tribes who became converted to Islam.

So we go to the south. In the west and centre there is the Chalukyan kingdom, largely consisting of the Maharashtra country, with Badami as their capital. Hiuen Tsang praises the Maharashtrians and speaks highly of their courage. They are "warlike and proud-spirited, grateful for favours and revengeful for wrongs." The Chalukyans had to hold Harsha in the north, the Pallavas in the south, and Kalinga (Orissa)

in the east. They grew in power and spread from sea to sea and then they were pushed away by the Rashtrakutas.

And so big empires and kingdoms flourished in the south—sometimes balancing each other, sometimes one of them growing and overshadowing the others. Under the Pandyan kings Madura was a great centre of culture and poets and writers of the Tamil language gathered there. Most of the classics of Tamil date from the beginning of the Christian era. The Pallavas also had their day of glory. They were largely responsible for the colonization of Malaysia. Their capital was Kanchipura—the modern Conjeevaram.

Later, the Chola Empire grew to power and about the middle of the ninth century, it dominated the south. It was a sea-power and had a big navy with which it swept the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian sea. Its chief port was Kaviripaddinam at the mouth of the Kaveri river. Vijayalaya was their first great ruler. They went on spreading north till the Rashtrakutas suddenly defeated them, but they recovered soon under Rajaraja, who restored the Chola fortunes. This was near the end of the tenth century, just about the time when Muslim invasions were taking place in north India. Rajaraja was of course little affected by what was happening in the far north and he carried on his imperialist ventures. He conquered Ceylon and the Cholas ruled there for seventy years. His son Rajendra was equally aggressive and warlike. He conquered southern Burma, taking his war elephants with him in his ships. He came to north India also and defeated the king of Bengal. The Chola Empire thus became very extensive, the biggest since the days of the Guptas. But it did not last. Rajendra was a great warrior but he appears to have been cruel and he did nothing to win over the States he had conquered. He reigned from 1013 to 1044, and after his death the Chola Empire broke up, many of the tributary States revolting.

Apart from their success in war, the Cholas were

long famous for their sea-trade. Their fine cotton goods were much sought after, and their port, Kaviripaddinam, was a busy place with ships carrying merchandise coming from and going to distant places. There was a settlement of the Yavanas or Greeks there. There is mention of the Cholas even in the *Mahābhārata*.

I have tried to tell you as briefly as possible of several hundred years of South Indian history. Probably this attempt at brevity will only confuse you. But we cannot afford to loose ourselves in the maze of different kingdoms and dynasties. We have the whole world to consider, and if a small part of it, even though it may be the part where we live, took up much of our time, we would never get on with the rest.

But more important than the kings and their conquests is the cultural and artistic record of those times. Artistically, there are far more remains than the north has to offer. Most of the northern monuments and buildings and sculptures were destroyed during the wars and Muslim invasions. In the south they escaped even when the Muslims reached there. It is unfortunate that numerous beautiful monuments were destroyed in the north. The Muslims who came there—and remember they were the Central Asians and not the Arabs—were full of zeal for their religion and wanted to destroy idols. But another reason for their destruction was perhaps the use of old temples as citadels and fighting places. Many of the temples in the south even now seem to resemble citadels where people can defend themselves if attacked. These temples thus served many purposes, apart from that of worship. They were the village schools, the village meeting-place, *panchāyat ghar* or parliament, and finally, if this became necessary, the village fort for defence against the enemy. Thus all the life of the village revolved round the temple, and naturally the people who must have bossed over everything were the temple priests and Brahmans. But the fact that a temple was used sometimes as a citadel may explain why the Muslim invaders destroyed them.

Of this period there is a beautiful temple at Tanjore built by Rajaraja, the Chola ruler. At Badami there are also fine temples—so also at Conjeevaram. But the most wonderful of the temples we have of those days is the Kailasa temple of Ellora—a marvel carved out of the solid rock. This was begun in the second half of the eighth century.

There are also beautiful pieces of sculpture in bronze, notably the famous Nataraja—Shiva's dance of life.

Rajendra I, the Chola King, had remarkable irrigation works constructed at Cholapuram—an embankment of solid masonry, 16 miles long. A hundred years after these were made an Arab traveller, Alberuni, visited them and he was amazed. He says of them: "Our people, when they see them, wonder at them and are unable to describe them, much less construct anything like them."

I have mentioned in this letter some names of kings and dynasties, who lived their brief life of glory and then disappeared and are forgotten. But a more remarkable man arose in the south, destined to play a more vital part in India's life than all the kings and emperors. This young man is known as Shankaracharya. Probably he was born about the end of the eight century. He seems to have been a person of amazing genius. He set about reviving Hinduism, or rather a special intellectual kind of Hinduism called Saivism—the worship of Shiva. He fought against Buddhism—fought with his intellect and arguments. He established an order of *Sanyāsins* open to all castes, like the Buddhist Sangha. He established four centres for this order of *Sanyāsins*, situated at the four corners of India, north, west, south, east. He travelled all over India and wherever he went he triumphed. He came to Benares as a conqueror, but a conqueror of the mind and in argument. Ultimately he went to Kedarnath in the Himalayas, where the eternal snows begin, and

he died there. And he was only 32, or may be a little more, when he died.

Shankaracharya's record is a remarkable one. Buddhism, which had been driven south from the north, now almost disappears from India. Hinduism, and the variety of it known as Saivism, becomes dominant all over the country. The whole country is stirred up intellectually by Shankara's books and commentaries and arguments. Not only does he become the great leader of the Brahman class, but he seems to catch the imagination of the masses. It is an unusual thing for a man to become a great leader chiefly because of his powerful intellect, and for such a person to impress himself on millions of people and on history. Great soldiers and conquerors seem to stand out in history. They become popular or are hated and sometimes they mould history. Great religious leaders have moved millions and fired them with enthusiasm, but always this has been on the basis of faith. The emotions have been appealed to and have been touched.

It is difficult for an appeal to the mind and to intellect to go far. Most people unfortunately do not think, they feel and act according to their feelings. Yet Shankara's appeal was to the mind and intellect and to reason. It was not just the repetition of a dogma contained in an old book. Whether his argument was right or wrong is immaterial for the moment. What is interesting is his intellectual approach to religious problems, and even more so, the success he gained in spite of this method of approach. This gives us a glimpse into the mind of the ruling classes in those days.

It may interest you to know that among Hindu philosophers there was a man named Charvaka, who preached atheism, that is, who said that there was no God. There are many people today, especially in Russia, who do not believe in God. We need not enter into that question here. But what is very interesting is the freedom of thought and writing in India in the olden days. There was what is known as freedom of

conscience. This was not so in Europe till very recent times, and even now there are some disabilities.

Another fact which Shankara's brief but strenuous life brings out is the cultural unity of India. Right through ancient history this seems to have been acknowledged. Geographically, as you know, India is more or less of a unit. Politically she has often been split up, though occasionally, as we have seen, she has almost been under one central authority. But right from the beginning, culturally she has been one, because she had the same background, the same traditions, the same religions, the same heroes and heroines, the same old mythology, the same learned language (Sanskrit), the same places of worship spread out all over the country, the same village *panchāyats* and the same ideology and polity. To the average Indian the whole of India was a kind of *punya-bhūmi,* a holy land, while the rest of the world was largely peopled by *mlechchhas* and barbarians! Thus there rose a common Indian consciousness which triumphed over, and partly ignored, the political divisions of the country. Especially this was so as the village system of *panchāyat* government continued, whatever the changes at the top might be.

Shankara's choice of the four corners of India for his *maths* or headquarters of his order of *Sanyāsins* shows how he regarded India as a cultural unit. And the great success which met his campaign all over the country in a very short time also shows how intellectual and cultural currents travelled rapidly from one end of the country to another.

Shankara preached Saivism, and this spread especially in the south where many of the old temples are Saiva temples. In the north, during Gupta times, there was a great revival of Vaishnavism and Krishna-worship. The temples of these two branches of Hinduism are different from each other.

This letter has become long enough. But I have still to say much about the condition of India during these middle ages. That must wait till the next letter.

45

INDIA IN THE MIDDLE AGES

May 14, 1932

You will remember my telling you of the *Arthashāstra*, the book written by Chanakya or Kautilya, who was the chief minister of Chandragupta Maurya, the grandfather of Ashoka. In this book we were told all manner of things about the people and methods of government of those days. It was almost as if a window was opened which enabled us to have a peep at India in the fourth century before Christ. Such books giving intimate details of administration are far more helpful than exaggerated accounts of kings and their conquests.

We have another book which helps us a little to form an idea of India in the middle ages. This is the *Nítisāra* of Shukracharya. This is not so good or helpful as the *Arthashāstra*, but with its help and that of some inscriptions and other accounts we shall try to open a window to the ninth or tenth century after Christ.

The *Nítisāra* tells us that "neither through colour, nor through ancestors can the spirit worthy of a Brahman be generated." Thus, according to it, caste division should not be by birth but by capacity. Again, it says; "In making official appointments work, character, and merit were to be regarded—neither caste nor family." The king was not to act upon his own opinions but upon the opinion of the majority of the people. "Public opinion is more powerful than the king as the rope made of many fibres is strong enough to drag a lion."

These are all excellent maxims, good even today in theory. But as a matter of fact, they do not take

us very far in practice. A man can rise by capacity and merit. But how is he to acquire the capacity and merit? A boy or a girl may be quite smart and may become a clever and efficient person if suitable education and training is given. But if no arrangements are made for the education or training what is the poor boy or girl to do?

In the same way what is public opinion? Whose opinion is to count as the opinion of the public? Probably the writer of the *Nītisāra* did not consider the large number of Shudra workers as entitled to give any opinion. They hardly counted. Public opinion was perhaps just the opinion of the upper and ruling classes.

Still it is interesting to notice that in Indian polity in the middle ages, as before, autocracy or the divine right of kings had no place.

Then we are told of the king's Council of State and of the high officers in charge of public works and parks and forests; of the organization of town and village life; of bridges, ferries, rest-houses, roads and—most important for a town or village—drains.

The village *panchāyats* had full control over the affairs of the village and the *panches* were treated with great respect by the king's officers. It was the *panchāyat* that distributed lands and collected taxes and then paid the government tax on behalf of the village. There appears to have been a big *panchāyat* or *mahasabha*, which supervised the work of these *panchāyats* and could interfere if there was need for it. These *panchāyats* also had judicial powers and could act as judges and try people.

Some old inscriptions from south India tell us how the members of the *panchāyats* were elected, their qualifications and disqualifications. If any member did not render accounts of public funds he was disqualified. Another very interesting rule seems to have been that near relatives of members were disqualified from office. How excellent if this could be enforced now in all our councils and assemblies and municipalities!

There is mention of a woman's name as a member of a committee. So it appears that women could serve on these *panchāyats* and their committees.

Committees were formed out of the elected members of the *panchāyat*, each committee lasting for a year. If a member misbehaved he could be removed at once.

This system of village self-government was the foundation of the Aryan polity. It was this that gave it strength. So jealous were the village assemblies of their liberties that it was laid down that no soldier was to enter a village except with a royal permit. The *Nītisāra* says that when the subjects complain of an officer the king "should take the side not of his officers but of his subjects;" and if many people complain the officer was to be dismissed, "for," says the *Nītisāra*, "who does not get intoxicated by drinking of the vanity of office?" Wise words which seem to apply especially to the crowds of officials who misbehave and misgovern us in this country today!

In the larger towns where there were many artisans and merchants, guilds were formed. Thus there were craft guilds, banking corporations and mercantile associations. There were of course religious organizations also. All these organizations had a great measure of control over their domestic affairs.

The king was enjoined to tax people lightly so as not to injure them or bear heavily on them. He was to levy taxes as a garland-maker gathers flowers and leaves from the trees in the forest, not like a charcoal burner.

Such is the fragmentary information that we can pick up about the middle ages in India. It is a little difficult to find out how far practice fitted in with the theory laid down in the books. It is easy enough to write of fine theories and ideals in books, but it is more difficult to live up to them. The books, however, help us to realize what the ideology or the ideas of the people were at the time, even though they may not have

practised them wholly. We find that the kings and rulers were far from being autocratic rulers. Their power was kept in check by elected *panchāyats.* We find also that there was a fairly advanced system of self-government in the villages and towns and that there was little interference with this by the central government.

But when I talk of the ideology of the people, or self-government, what do I mean? The whole social structure in India was based on the caste system. In theory, this may not have been rigid and may have been open to merit or capacity, as the *Nītisāra* says. But in reality this means very little. The ruling classes or castes were the Brahmans and Kshattriyas. Sometimes there was conflict between them for mastery, more often they ruled jointly and accommodated each other. The others they kept down. Gradually as trade and commerce increased the merchant class became rich and important. As it grew in importance it was given certain privileges and freedom to arrange the domestic affairs of its guilds. But even then it had no real share in the power of the State. As for the poor Shudras, they remained the bottom dogs right through. And even below them were others still.

Occasionally men from the lower castes made good. Shudras were even known to become kings. But this was a great exception. A more frequent method of rising in the social scale was for a whole sub-caste to go up a step. New tribes were often absorbed into Hinduism at the bottom; slowly they worked themselves up.

You will see therefore that although there was no labour slavery in India as in the West, our whole social structure was one of gradations—one class over another. The millions at the bottom were exploited by and had to bear the weight of all those at the top. And the people at the top took care to perpetuate this system and to keep the power for themselves by not giving opportunities of education or training to these poor

people at the bottom of the ladder. In the village *panchāyats* perhaps the peasantry had some say and could not be ignored. But it is highly likely that a few clever Brahmans dominated these *panchāyats* also.

The old Aryan polity seems to continue from the days when the Aryans came to India and came into touch with the Dravidians to the middle ages of which we are speaking. But there appears to be a progressive deterioration and weakening. Perhaps it was growing old; and perhaps the repeated incursions from outside gradually wore it down.

It might interest you to know that India was great in mathematics in the old days and among the great names is that of a woman—Lilavati. It is said that it was Lilavati and her father, Bhaskaracharya, and perhaps another man, Brahmagupta, who first evolved the decimal system. Algebra is also said to be of Indian origin. From India it went to Arabia and from there to Europe. The word Algebra is from the Arabic.

46

ANGKOR THE MAGNIFICENT AND SRI VIJAYA

May 17, 1932

We shall now pay a brief visit to Farther India—the colonies and settlements of people from south India in Malaysia and Indo-China. I have already told you how these settlements were deliberately organized and arranged. They did not just grow up any-how. There must have been frequent journeys across the seas and a sufficient mastery over the seas, to permit of this deliberate colonization simultaneously at several places. I have also told you that these colonies began in the first and second centuries of the Christian era. They were Hindu colonies bearing south Indian names. After some centuries Buddhism gradually spread, till nearly the whole of Hindu Malaysia had become Buddhist.

Let us go to Indo-China first. The earliest colony was named Champa. It was in Annam. There we find in the third century the city of Pandurangam growing up. Two hundred years later the great city of Kamboja flourished. It was full of great buildings and temples of stone. All over these Indian colonies you will find mighty buildings growing up. Architects and master builders must have been taken across from India and they carried on the Indian traditions in building there. Between the different States and islands there was a great deal of competition in building and this competition resulted in a high type of artistic development.

The people living in these settlements were naturally sea-faring folk. They or their ancestors had already

crossed the seas to reach these places and all round them was the sea. Sea-faring folk take to trade easily. So these people were traders and merchants, carrying their wares across the seas to the different islands, to India in the west and to China in the east. The different States in Malaysia were thus controlled largely by the merchant classes. Often there was conflict between these States and great wars and massacres. Sometimes a Hindu State waged war against a Buddhist State. But the real motive for many of these wars in those days seems to have been trade rivalry. Just as in these days wars take place between great Powers for markets for the goods they manufacture.

For three hundred years or so, upto the 8th century, there were three different Hindu States in Indo-China. In the 9th century a great ruler arose—Jaya-varman, who united all these and built up a great empire. He was probably a Buddhist. He began building his capital at Angkor and his successor Yaso-varman completed it. This Cambodian Empire lasted for nearly four hundred years. As empires go, it was supposed to be splendid and powerful. The royal city of Angkor Thom was known as "Angkor the Magnificent" all over the East. Near it was the wonderful temple of Angkor Vat. In the 13th century Cambodia was attacked on several sides. The Annamese attacked in the east, the local tribes in the west. And in the north the Shan people were driven south by Mongols, and finding no other way of escape, they attacked Cambodia. The kingdom was tired out by this constant fighting and defending itself. Still the city of Angkor continued to be one of the most splendid cities in the East. In 1297 a Chinese envoy, who had been sent to the Cambodian King, wrote a glowing description of its wonderful buildings.

But suddenly Angkor suffered a terrible catastrophe. About 1300 A.C. the mouth of the river Mekong became blocked by deposits of mud. The waters of the river could not flow through and they

backed up and flooded the entire region round the great city, turning fertile fields into a great area of useless marsh lands. The large population of the city began to starve. It could not stay on and was forced to leave the city and migrate. So 'Angkor the Magnificent' was abandoned, and the jungle came and took possession of it, and its wonderful buildings housed wild animals for a while, till the jungle reduced the palaces to dust and reigned unchallenged.

The Cambodian State could not survive this catastrophe for long. It collapsed gradually and became a province sometimes ruled by Siam, sometimes by Annam. But even now the ruins of the great temple of Angkor Vat tell us something of the days when a proud and splendid city stood near by, drawing merchants with their wares from distant lands, and sending out to other countries the fine goods that its citizens and artisans made.

Across the sea, not very far from Indo-China, lay the island of Sumatra. Here also the Pallavas from south India had established their earliest colonies in the first or second century after Christ. These grew gradually. The Malay Peninsula early became part of the Sumatran State and for long afterwards the histories of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula were closely allied. The capital of the State was the large city of Sri Vijaya, situated inland in the mountains of Sumatra. It had a port at the mouth of the Palembang river. About the fifth or sixth century Buddhism became the predominant religion of Sumatra. Indeed Sumatra took the lead in carrying on active missionary work for Buddhism and ultimately succeeded in converting most of Hindu Malaysia to Buddhism. This Sumatran empire is therefore known as the Buddhist Empire of Sri Vijaya.

Sri Vijaya went on growing bigger and bigger till it included not only Sumatra and Malay but Borneo, Philippines, Celebes, half of Java, half of the island of Formosa (which belongs to Japan now), Ceylon, and

even a port in the south of China near Canton. Probably it included a port in the southern tip of India also, facing Ceylon. You will thus see that it was a widespread empire, covering the whole of Malaysia. Commerce and trade and ship-building were the chief occupations of these Indian colonies. The Chinese and Arabian writers give us long lists of ports and new colonies subject to the Sumatran State. These lists go on growing.

The British Empire today is spread out all over the world and everywhere it has got sea-ports and good coaling stations. Gibralter, the Suez Canal (which is largely under British control), Aden, Colombo, Singapore, Honk Kong and so on. The British have been a nation of traders during the last three hundred years and their trade and strength have depended on sea power. They have thus required ports and coaling stations at convenient distances all over the world. The Sri Vijaya Empire was also a sea power based on trade. Hence you find it having ports wherever they had the smallest footing. Indeed a remarkable feature of the settlements of the Sumatran State was their strategic value, that is to say, they were carefully located at places where they could command the surrounding seas. Often they were in pairs to help each other in maintaining this command.

Thus Singapore, which is a great city now, was originally a settlement of the Sumatran colonists. The name, as you will notice, is a typical Indian name: (Singhpur). The Sumatran people had another settlement just opposite the Straits, facing Singapore. Sometimes they would stretch an iron chain right across the Strait and so stop all ships from passing till they paid up heavy tolls.

So the Empire of Sri Vijaya was not unlike the British Empire. Of course it was much smaller. But it lasted longer than the British Empire is likely to last! Its period of highest development was in the eleventh century, just about the time when the Chola

Empire flourished in south India. But it long outlived this Chola Empire. It would be interesting to find out the relations between the Cholas and Sri Vijaya. Both were aggressive seafaring folk. Both indulged in imperialist ventures. Both had strong navies and both went in for trade. There must have been many contacts. Were they friendly or otherwise? I do not know. Perhaps the old books contain something about this.

At the beginning of the eleventh century the Chinese emperor sent a gift of a number of bronze bells to the Sumatran king. In return the latter sent pearls and ivory and Sanskrit books. There was also a letter inscribed on a golden plate in "Indian characters," it is said. I do not know whether these characters were the *Devanāgarī* or some other belonging to a Dravidian language of the south. Probably the language used was Sanskrit or Pālī.

Sri Vijaya flourished for quite a long time. From its early beginnings about the second century to the fifth or sixth century when it turned Buddhist, and then, gradual and continuous growth till the eleventh century. For another three hundred years it remained a great empire controlling the trade and commerce of Malaysia. It was overthrown ultimately in 1377 A.C. by another of the old Pallava colonies.

I have told you that the Sri Vijaya Empire spread from Ceylon to Canton in China. It included most of the islands in between. But one little bit it could not subdue. This was the eastern part of Java which continued to remain an independent State and which also remained Hindu and refused to turn Buddhist. Thus western Java was under Sri Vijaya; eastern Java was independent. This Hindu State of East Java was also a commercial state and it depended for its prosperity on trade. It must have looked with envious eyes on Singapore which, because of its fine position, had become a great trade centre. Thus there was rivalry between Sri Vijaya and East Java and this developed

into bitter enmity. From the twelfth century onwards the Javan State grew slowly at the expense of Sri Vijaya and, as I have said, in the fourteenth century, in 1377 A.C., it defeated Sri Vijaya completely. It was a cruel war and there was great destruction. Both the cities of Sri Vijaya and Singapore were destroyed. Thus ended the second of the great empires of Malaysia—the empire of Sri Vijaya—and over its ruins rose the third of these empires, that of Madjapahit.

In spite of the cruelty and barbarity shown by the East Javans in their war with Sri Vijaya, it appears that this Hindu State had attained a high degree of civilization. We still have many books of that period in Java. What it excelled in, however, was building, and especially the building of temples. There were over five hundred temples, and among these are said to be some of the world's finest and most artistic specimens in stone architecture. Most of these great temples were built between the middle of the seventh and the middle of the tenth century, that is, between 650 and 950 A.C. The Javanese must have brought large numbers of builders and master-craftsmen from India and other neighbouring countries to help them to build these mighty temples. We shall have to follow the fortunes of Java and Madjapahit in a subsequent letter.

I might mention here that both Borneo and the Philippines learnt the art of writing from India, through these early Pallava colonies. Unfortunately many of the old manuscripts in the Philippines were destroyed by the Spaniards.

Remember also that the Arabs had their colonies all over these islands from the early days, long before Islam. They were great traders and where trade was, the Arabs went.

47

ROME RELAPSES INTO DARKNESS

May 19, 1932

I feel often enough that I am not at all a good guide for you through the maze of past history. I get lost myself. How then can I guide you aright? But again I think that perhaps I might be of a little help to you, and so I continue these letters. To me certainly they are of great help. As I write them and think of you, my dear, I forget that the temperature in the shade and where I sit is 112 degrees and the hot *loo* is blowing. And I forget even sometimes that I am in the District Jail of Bareilly.

My last letter carried you right up to the end of the fourteenth century in Malaysia. And yet in north India we have not gone beyond King Harsha's time—the seventh century; and in Europe we have still more time to make up. It is very difficult to keep to the same time scale everywhere. I try to do so but sometimes, as in the case of Angkor and Sri Vijaya, I shot ahead a few hundred years, so that I could complete their story. But remember that while the Cambodian Empire and the Sri Vijaya Empire flourished in the East, all manner of changes were taking place in India and in China and in Europe. Remember that my last letter contains, in a few pages, the history of a thousand years of Indo-China and Malaysia. These countries are cut off from the main currents of Asiatic and European history and therefore little attention is paid to them. But theirs is a rich and long history—rich in achievement, in trade, in art, in architecture especially—and it is well worthy of study. To Indians their story must be of particular interest, for they were almost a part

of India; men and women from India, crossing the eastern seas and carrying with them Indian culture and civilization and art and religion.

So, although we have gone on ahead in Malaysia, we are really still in the seventh century. We have still to go Arabia and consider the coming of Islam and the great changes that this brought in Europe and Asia. And we have to follow the course of events in Europe.

Let us have another look at Europe and let us go back a little. You will remember that Constantine, the Roman Emperor, founded the city of Constantinople, where Byzantium was, on the banks of the Bosphorus. To this city, the New Rome, he took the capital of the Empire from the old Rome. Soon after the Roman Empire split up into two, the Western with Rome for its capital and the Eastern Empire with its seat at Constantinople. The Eastern Empire had great difficulties and many enemies. And yet strange to say it managed to carry on century after century, for eleven hundred years, till the Turks put an end to it.

The Western Empire had no such existence. In spite of the great prestige of the Roman name and the imperial city of Rome, which had for so long dominated the western world, it collapsed with remarkable rapidity. It could not withstand the attacks of any of the northern tribes. Alaric, the Goth, marched down into Italy and captured Rome in 410 A.C. Later came the Vandals, who also sacked Rome. The Vandals were a Germanic people who had crossed France and Spain, and entering Africa had established a kingdom on the ruins of Carthage. From old Carthage they crossed the seas and captured Rome. It seems almost a belated revenge for the Roman victory in the Punic Wars!

About this time the Huns, who had originally come from Central Asia or Mongolia, became powerful. These people were nomads. They had settled down east of the Danube river and north and west of the Eastern

Roman Empire. Under Attila, their leader, they became very aggressive and the Constantinople government and emperor lived in continuous terror of them. Attila bullied them and made them pay large sums of money to him. Having humiliated the Eastern Empire sufficiently, Attila decided to attack the Western Empire. He invaded Gaul and destroyed many towns in southern France. The imperial forces were no match for him, but the Germanic tribes, the "barbarians" of the Romans, were frightened at this Hun invasion. And so the Franks and Goths joined the imperial army and together they fought the Huns under Attila at a great battle at Troyes. Over a hundred and fifty thousand people are said to have been killed at this battle. But Attila was defeated and the Mongolian Huns repulsed. This was in 451 A.C. But Attila, though defeated, was full of fight. He went down to Italy and burnt and looted many towns in the north. He died soon after, but he left an enduring reputation for cruelty and ruthlessness. Attila the Hun is even today almost the embodiment of ruthless destruction. The Huns quietened down after his death. They settled down and got mixed up with many other populations. You may remember that it was roughly about this time that the White Huns were in India.

Forty years later a Goth, Theodoric, became King of Rome, and that was almost the final end of the Western Empire. A successful attempt was made a little later by an Eastern Emperor, Justinian, to include Italy in his empire. He conquered both Italy and Sicily. But they broke away soon enough, and the Eastern Empire had enough to do to protect itself.

Is it not strange that Imperial Rome and her empire should have collapsed so quickly and so easily before almost every tribe that chose to attack it? One would think that Rome had gone to pieces, or that it was just a hollow shell. Probably this would be correct. The strength of Rome for a lengthy period lay in her prestige. Her past history had led other peoples to

think of her as the leader of the world and they treated her with respect and almost with superstitious fear. So Rome continued, outwardly as a powerful mistress of an empire but in reality with no strength behind her. There was outward calm, and there were crowds in her theatres and stadiums and market-places. But inevitably she was heading for collapse. Not merely because she was weak, but because she had built up a rich man's civilization on the misery and slavery of the masses. I told you, in one of my letters, of the revolts and insurrections of the poor; also of a great slaves' revolt which was ruthlessly put down. These revolts show us how rotten was the social structure of Rome. It was going to pieces of itself. The coming of the northern tribes—the Goths and the others—helped this process, and therefore they met with little opposition. The Roman peasant was fed up with his miserable lot. He welcomed any change. As for the poor labourer and the slave, he was far worse off.

With the end of the Western Roman Empire we see the new peoples of the West coming to the front—the Goths and Franks and others whose names I shall not trouble you with. These peoples are the ancestors of the Western Europeans of today—the Germans, French, etc. Slowly we see these countries taking shape in Europe. At the same time we find a very low type of civilization. The end of Imperial Rome had also been the end of the pomp and luxury of Rome, and the superficial civilization which had dragged on in Rome vanished almost in a day. Its roots had long been sapped. Thus we see actually one of the strange instances when humanity visibly goes back. We have this in India, in Egypt, in China, in Greece and Rome and elsewhere. After having laboriously gathered knowledge and experience and built up a culture and civilization, there is a stop. And not only a stop, but a going back. A veil seems to be cast over the past, and though we have occasional glimpses of it, the mountain of knowledge and experience has to be climbed afresh.

Perhaps each time one goes a little higher and makes the next ascent easier. Just as expedition after expedition goes up Mount Everest. Each subsequent expedition goes nearer to the summit, and, may be, the highest peak will be conquered before long.

So we find darkness in Europe. The Dark Ages begin and life becomes rude and crude, and there is almost no education, and fighting seems to be the only occupation or amusement. The days of Socrates and Plato seem very far off indeed.

So much for the West. Let us look at the Eastern Empire also. Constantine, you will remember, made Christianity the official religion. One of his successors, the Emperor Julian, refused to accept Christianity. He wanted to go back to the worship of the old gods and goddesses. But he could not succeed. The old gods had had their day, and Christianity was too powerful for them. Julian was called Julian the Apostate by the Christians and that is the title by which he is known in history.

Soon after Julian came another emperor who was very unlike him. His name was Theodosius, and he is called the Great, I suppose because he was great in destroying the old temples and the old statues of the gods and goddesses. He was not only strong against those who were not Christians; he was equally aggressive against Christians who were not orthodox according to his way of thinking. He wanted to tolerate no opinion or religion of which he did not approve. Theodosius for a short while joined the Eastern and Western Empires and was emperor of both. This was in 392 A.C. before the barbarian invasions of Rome.

Christianity continued to spread. Its troubles were not against non-Christians. All the fighting was done by Christian sects against each other. The amount of intolerance shown by them is amazing. All over north Africa and west Asia, as well as in Europe, there were many battle-grounds where Christians sought to convince their brother Christians of the true faith by

means of blows and cudgels and such like gentle measures of persuasion.

From 527 to 565 A.C. Justinian was emperor at Constantinople. As I have already told you, he turned out the Goths from Italy and for some time Italy and Sicily were parts of the Eastern Empire. Later the Goths recovered Italy.

Justinian built the beautiful cathedral of Sancta Sophia in Constantinople which is still one of the finest of Byzantine churches. He also had all the existing laws brought together and arranged by able lawyers. Long before I knew anything of the Eastern Roman Empire and its emperors, I knew of Justinian's name from this law-book which is called the "Institutes of Justinian." I had to read this. But although Justinian founded a university at Constantinople, he closed the academy or the old schools of philosophy of Athens. These schools had been founded by Plato and had lasted a thousand years. Philosophy is a dangerous thing for any dogmatic religion. It makes a person think.

And so we have arrived at the sixth century. We see gradually Rome and Constantinople drifting further apart; Rome taken possession of by the Germanic tribes of the north; Constantinople becoming the centre of a Greek empire, although it was called Roman; Rome going to pieces and attaining the low level of civilization of its conquerors, whom it used to call the 'barbarians' in the days of its glory; Constantinople carrying on the old tradition in a way but also going down in the scale of civilization; Christian sects fighting each other for mastery; and eastern Christianity which had spread right up to Turkestan and China and Abyssinia becoming cut off from both Constantinople and Rome. The Dark Ages commence. Learning so far was classical learning, that is Greek or old Latin, which derived its inspiration from Greek. But these old Greek books dealt with gods and goddesses and with philosophies. They seemed to be no fit literature for the pious and devout and intolerant Christians of those

early days. So they were not encouraged and learning suffered, and so also many forms of art.

But Christianity did something also to preserve learning and art. Like the Buddhist *Sangha*, monasteries were founded and spread rapidly. In these monasteries sometimes the old learning found a home. And here also the beginnings of a new art were laid down which was to bossom forth in all its beauty many centuries later. These monks just managed to keep the lamp of learning and art burning dimly. It was a service they rendered by preventing it from going out. But the light was confined to a narrow place; outside there was general darkness.

In these early days of Christianity there was another strange tendency. Many people, fired by religious zeal, retired into the deserts and out of the way places, far from the haunts of man, and lived in a wild state there. They tortured themselves and did not wash at all and generally tried to bear as much pain as possible. This was especially so in Egypt where many such hermits lived in the desert. Their idea seems to have been that the more they suffered and the less they washed the holier they became. One of these hermits sat on the top of a column for many years! These hermits gradually ceased to exist, but for long many devout Christians believed that to enjoy anything was almost a sin. This idea of suffering coloured the Christian mentality. There is not much of it in Europe today! Indeed everybody there seems bent on madly rushing about and in having what is called a good time. And the rushing often ends in weariness and ennui and not in the good time!

But in India we see sometimes even today people behaving to some extent as the Christian hermits did in Egypt. They hold up one arm till it dries up and atrophies, or sit on spikes or do so many other absurd and foolish things. Some do it, I suppose, just to impose on ignorant people to get money out of them. Some perhaps because they feel that they

become more holy thereby! As if it can ever be desirable to make your body unfit for any decent activity.

I am reminded of a story of Buddha, for which again I go to our old friend Hiuen Tsang. A young disciple of his was doing penance. Buddha asked him: "You, dear youth, when living as a layman, did you know how to play the flute?" He said: "I knew." "Well, then," said Buddha, "I will draw a comparison derived from this. The cords being too tight, then the sounds were not in cadence; when they were too loose, then the sounds had neither harmony nor charm; but when not tight and not slack, then the sound were harmonious." "So also," Buddha continued, "in regard to the body. If it is harshly treated, it becomes wearied and the mind is listless; if it is too softly treated then the feelings are pampered and the will is weakened."

48

THE COMING OF ISLAM

May 21, 1932

We have considered the history of many countries and the ups and downs of many kingdoms and empires. But Arabia has not come into our story yet, except as a country which sent out mariners and traders to distant parts of the world. Look at the map. To the west is Egypt; to the north Syria and Iraq, and a little to the east of this Persia; a little further to the north-west is Asia Minor and Constantinople. Greece is not far; and India also is just across the sea on the other side. Except for China and the Far East, Arabia was very centrally situated so far as the old civilizations were concerned. Great cities rose on the Tigris and Euphrates in Iraq; Alexandria in Egypt; Damascus in Syria; Antioch in Asia Minor. The Arab was a traveller and a trader and he must have gone to these cities frequently enough. But still Arabia plays no notable part in history. There does not seem to be as high a degree of civilization there as in neighbouring countries. It neither attempted to conquer other countries, nor was it easy to subdue it.

It is a desert country, and deserts and mountains breed hard people who love their freedom and are not easily subdued. It was not a rich country and there was little in it to attract foreign conquerors and imperialists. There were just two little towns—Mecca and Yethrib by the sea. For the rest there were dwellings in the desert, and the people of the country were largely Bedouins or Baddus—the 'dwellers of the desert.' Their constant companions were their swift camels and their beautiful horses, and even the ass was a valued and

faithful friend for its remarkable powers of endurance. To be compared to the donkey or the ass was a compliment and not a term of reproach, as in other countries. For life is hard in a desert country and strength and endurance are even more precious qualities there than elsewhere.

They were proud and sensitive, these men of the desert, and quarrelsome. They lived in their clans and their families and quarrelled with other clans and families. Once a year they made peace with each other and journeyed to Mecca on pilgrimage to their many gods whose images were kept there. Above all, they worshipped a huge black stone—the Kaaba.

It was a nomadic and patriarchal life—the kind of life led by the primitive tribes in Central Asia or elsewhere, before they settled down to city life and civilization. The great empires which rose round Arabia often included Arabia in their dominions, but this was more nominal than real. It was no easy matter to subdue or govern nomadic desert tribes.

Once, as you might perhaps remember, a little Arab State rose in Palmyra in Syria and it had its brief period of glory in the third century after Christ. But even this was outside Arabia proper. So the Bedouins lived their desert lives, generation after generation, and Arab ships went out to trade, and Arabia went on with little change. Some people became Christians and some became Jews but mostly they remained worshippers of the 360 idols and the Black Stone in Mecca.

It is strange that this Arab race, which for long ages had lived a sleepy existence, apparently cut off from what was happening elsewhere, should suddenly wake up and show such tremendous energy as to startle and upset the world. The story of the Arabs, and of how they spread rapidly over Asia, Europe and Africa, and of the high culture and civilization which they developed, is one of the wonders of history.

Islam was the new force or idea which woke up the Arabs and filled them with self-confidence and

energy. This was a religion started by a new prophet, Mohammad, born in Mecca in 570 A.C. He was in no hurry to start this religion. He lived a quiet life, liked and trusted by his fellow-citizens. Indeed he was known as "Al-Amīn"—the Trusty. But when he started preaching his new religion and especially when he preached against the idols at Mecca, there was a loud outcry against him and ultimately he was driven out of Mecca, barely escaping with his life. Above all he laid stress on the one God, and that he, Mohammad, was the Prophet of God.

Driven away by his own people from Mecca, he sought refuge with some friends and helpers in Yethrib. This flight from Mecca is called the *Hijrat* in Arabic, and the Muslim calendar begins from this date—A.C. 622. This Hegira calendar is a lunar calendar, that is, it is calculated according to the moon. It is therefore five or six days less than the solar year which we usually observe, and the Hegira months do not stick to the same seasons of the year. Thus the same month may be in winter this year and in the middle of summer after some years.

Islam may be said to begin with the flight—the Hijrat—in A.C. 622, although in a sense it had begun a little earlier. The city of Yethrib welcomed Mohammad and, in honour of his coming the name of the city itself was changed to "Madīnat-un-Nabī"—the city of the Prophet—or, just shortly, Madina, as it is known now. The people of Madina who helped Mohammad were called *Ansār*—the helpers. Descendants of these "helpers" were proud of this title and even to this day they use it. You know at least one of them—our very good friend Dr. M. A. Ansari.

Before we start on Islam's and the Arab's career of conquest, let us have one brief look around. We have just seen that Rome had collapsed. The old Graeco-Roman civilization had ended, and the whole social structure which it had built up had been upset. The north European tribes and clans were now coming

into some prominence. Trying to learn something from Rome, they were really building up an entirely new type of civilization. But this was just the beginning of it and there was little of it visible. Thus the old had gone and the new had not taken its place; so there was darkness in Europe. At the eastern end of it, it is true, there was the Eastern Roman Empire which still flourished. The city of Constantinople was even then a great and splendid city—the greatest in Europe. Games and circuses took place in its amphitheatres and there was a great deal of pomp and show. But still the Empire was weakening. There were continuous wars with the Sassanids of Persia. Khusrau the Second of Persia had indeed taken away from Constantinople part of its dominions. Khusrau even claimed a nominal over-lordship over Arabia. Khusrau also conquered Egypt and went right up to Constantinople, but was then defeated by Heraclius the Greek Emperor there. Later, Khusrau was murdered by his own son Kavadh.

So you will notice that both Europe in the west and Persia in the east were in a bad way. Add to this the quarrels of the Christian sects which had no end. A very corrupted and quarrelsome Christianity flourished in the West as well as in Africa. In Persia, the Zoroastrian religion was part of the State and was forced on the people. So the average person in Europe or Africa or Persia was fed up with the existing religion. Just about this time, early in the seventh century, great plagues swept all over Europe killing millions of people.

In India, Harsha-Vardhana ruled and Hiuen Tsang paid his visit about this time. During Harsha's reign India was a strong power, but soon after north India grew divided and weak. Further east in China the great Tang dynasty had just begun its career. In 627 A.C. Tai Tsung, one of their greatest emperors, came to the throne and during his time the Chinese Empire extended right up to the Caspian Sea in the west. Most of the countries of Central Asia acknowledged his suzerainty and paid tribute to him. Probably there was no

centralized government of the whole of this vast empire.

This was the state of the Asiatic and European world when Islam was born. China was strong and powerful, but it was far; India was strong enough for a period at least, but we shall see that there was no conflict with India for a long time to come; Europe and Africa were weak and exhausted.

Within seven years from the flight, Mohammad returned to Mecca as its master. Even before this he sent out from Medina summons to the kings and rulers of the world to acknowledge the one God and his Prophet. Heraclius, the Constantinople Emperor, got it as he was still engaged in his campaign against the Persians in Syria; the Persian King got it; and it is said even Tai-Tsung got it in China. They must have wondered, these kings and rulers, who this unknown person was who dared to command them! From the sending of these messages we can form some idea of the supreme confidence in himself and his mission which Mohammad must have had. And this confidence and faith he managed to give to his people, and with this to inspire them and console them, this desert people of no great consequence managed to conquer half the known world.

Confidence and faith in themselves was a great thing. Islam also gave them a message of brotherhood —of equality of all those who were Muslims. A measure of democracy was thus placed before the people. Compared to the corrupted Christianity of the day, this message of brotherhood must have had a great appeal, not only for the Arabs, but also for the inhabitants of many countries where they went.

Mohammad died in 632 A.C., ten years after the *Hijrat*. He had succeeded in making a nation out of the many warring tribes of Arabia and in firing them with enthusiasm for a cause. He was succeeded by Abu Bakr, a member of his family, as Khalifa or Caliph or chief. This succession used to be by a kind of informal elec-

tion at a public meeting. Two years later Abu Bakr died and was succeeded by Omar, who was Khalifa for ten years.

Abu Bakr and Omar were great men who laid the foundation of Arabian and Islamic greatness. As Khalifas they were both religious heads and political chiefs—King and Pope in one. In spite of their high position and the growing power of their State, they stuck to the simplicity of their ways and refused to countenance luxury and pomp. The democracy of Islam was a living thing for them. But their own officers and emirs took to silks and luxury soon enough, and many stories are told of Abu Bakr and Omar rebuking and punishing these officers and even weeping at this extravagance. They felt that their strength lay in their simple and hard living and if they took to the luxury of the Persian or Constantinople courts, the Arabs would be corrupted and would fall.

Even in these short dozen years, during which Abu Bakr and Omar ruled, the Arabs defeated both the Eastern Roman Empire and the Sassanid King of Persia. Jerusalem, the holy city of the Jews and Christians, was occupied by the Arabs, and the whole of Syria and Iraq and Persia became part of the new Arabian Empire.

49

THE ARABS CONQUER FROM SPAIN TO MONGOLIA

May 23, 1932

Like the founders of some other religions, Mohammad was a rebel against many of the existing social customs. The religion he preached, by its simplicity and directness and its flavour of democracy and equality, appealed to the masses in the neighbouring countries. They had been ground down long enough by autocratic kings and equally autocratic and domineering priests. They were tired of the old order and were ripe for a change. Islam offered them this change and it was a welcome change, for it bettered them in many ways and put an end to many old abuses. Islam did not bring any great social revolution in its train which might have put an end to a large extent to the exploitation of the masses. But it did lessen this exploitation so far as the Muslims were concerned and made them feel that they belonged to one great brotherhood.

So the Arabs marched from conquest to conquest. Often enough they won without fighting. The enemy was weak and his own people deserted him. Within twenty-five years of the death of their Prophet, the Arabs conquered the whole of Persia and Syria and Armenia and a bit of Central Asia on the one side; and Egypt and a bit of north Africa on the west. Egypt had fallen to them with the greatest ease, as Egypt had suffered most from the exploitation of the Roman Empire and from the rivalry of Christian sects. There is a story that the Arabs burnt the famous library of Alexandria, but this is now believed to be false. The Arabs were too fond of books to behave in this barbarous manner. It is probable, however, that the Emperor

Theodosius of Constantinople, about whom I have told you something already, was guilty of this destruction, or part of it. A part of the library was destroyed long before, during a siege at the time of Julius Cæsar. Theodosius did not approve of old pagan Greek books dealing with the old Greek mythologies and philosophies. He was much too devout a Christian. It is said that he used these books to heat his baths with!

The Arabs went on advancing both in the east and the west. In the east, Herat and Kabul and Balkh fell, and they reached the Indus river and Sindh. But beyond this they did not go into India, and for several hundred years their relations with the Indian rulers were of the friendliest. In the west they marched on and on. It is said that their general Okba went right across north Africa till he reached the Atlantic Ocean, on the western coast of what is known as Morocco now. He was rather disappointed at this obstacle, and he rode as far as he could into the sea and then expressed his sorrow to the Almighty that there was no more land in that direction for him to conquer in His name!

From Morocco and Africa, the Arabs crossed the narrow seas into Spain and Europe—the Pillars of Hercules as these narrow straits were called by the old Greeks. The Arab general who crossed into Europe landed at Gibralter, and this name itself is a reminder of him. His name was Tariq and Gibralter is really Jabal-ut-Tariq, the rock of Tariq.

Spain was conquered rapidly and the Arabs then poured into south France. So, in about a hundred years from the death of Mohammad, the Arab Empire spread from the south of France and Spain right across north Africa to Suez, and across Arabia and Persia and Central Asia to the borders of Mongolia. India was out of it except for Sindh. Europe was being attacked by the Arabs from two sides—directly at Constantinople, and in France, *via* Africa. The Arabs in the south of France were small in numbers and they were very far from their homeland. They could not get much help from Arabia.

Besides, Arabia was busy conquering Central Asia. But still these Arabs in France frightened the people of western Europe and a great coalition was formed to fight them. Charles Martel was the leader of this coalition and in 732 A.C. he defeated them at the battle of Tours in France. This defeat saved Europe from the Arabs. "On the plains of Tours," a historian has said, "the Arabs lost the empire of the world when almost in their grasp." There can be no doubt that if the Arabs had won at Tours, European history would have been tremendously changed. There was no one else to stop them in Europe and they could have marched right across to Constantinople and put an end to the Eastern Roman Empire and the other States on the way. Instead of Christianity, Islam would then have become the religion of Europe, and all manner of other changes might have taken place! But this is just a flight of imagination. As it happened, the Arabs were stopped in France. For many hundreds of years afterwards, however, they remained and ruled in Spain.

From Spain to Mongolia the Arabs triumphed, and these nomads from the deserts became the proud rulers of a mighty empire. Saracens, they were called, perhaps from *Sahrā* and *nashīn* meaning dwellers—the dwellers of the desert. But the dwellers of the desert took soon enough to luxury and city life, and palaces grew up in their cities. In spite of their triumphs in distant countries, they could not get rid of their old habit of quarrelling amongst themselves. Of course, there was something worth quarrelling about now, for the headship of Arabia meant the control of a great empire. So there were frequent quarrels for the place of the Khalifa. There were petty quarrels, family quarrels, leading to civil war. These quarrels resulted in a big division in Islam and two sects were formed—the Sunnis and Shiahs—which still exist.

Trouble came soon after the régimes of the first two great Khalifas—Abu Bakr and Omar. Ali, the husband of Fatima, who was the daughter of Moham-

mad, was Khalifa for a short while. But there was continuous conflict. Ali was murdered, and some time later his son Hussain, with his family, was massacred in the plain of Karbala. It is this tragedy of Karbala that is mourned year after year in the month of Moharram by the Moslems, and especially the Shiahs.

The Khalifa now becomes an absolute king. There is nothing of democracy or election left about him. He was just like any other absolute monarch of his day. In theory he continued to be the religious head also, the Commander of the Faithful. But some of these rulers actually insulted Islâm of which they were supposed to be the chief protectors. One of them turned the public mosque in Medīna into a stable.

For about a hundred years the Khalifas belonged to a branch of Mohammad's family, known as the Ommayades. Damascus was made their capital, and this old city became very beautiful with its palaces, mosques, fountains and kiosks. The water supply of Damascus was famous. During this period the Arabs developed a special style of architecture which has come to be known as Saracenic architecture. There was not much of ornamentation in this. It is simple and imposing and beautiful. The idea behind this architecture was the graceful palm of Arabia and Syria. The arches and the pillars and the minarets and domes remind one of the arching and doming of palm groves.

This architecture came to India also, but here it was influenced by Indian ideas and a mixed style was evolved. Some of the finest examples of Saracenic architecture are still in Spain.

Wealth and empire brought luxury and the games and arts of luxury. Horse-racing was a very favourite amusement of the Arabs. So also was polo and hunting and chess. There was quite a fashionable craze for music and especially singing, and the capital was full of singers with their trains and hangers-on.

Another great but very unfortunate change gradually took place. This was in the position of women.

Among the Arabs women did not observe any *purdah*. They were not secluded and hidden away. They moved about in public, went to mosques and lectures, and even delivered lectures. But success made the Arabs imitate more and more the customs of the two old empires on either side of them—the Eastern Roman and the Persian. They had defeated the former and put an end to the latter, but they themselves succumbed to many an evil habit of these empires. It is said that it was due especially to the influence of Constantinople and Persia that the seclusion of women began among the Arabs. Gradually the *harem* system begins and men and women meet each other less and less socially. Unhappily this seclusion of women became a feature of Islamic society and India also learnt it from them when the Muslims came here. It amazes me to think that some people put up with this barbarity still. Whenever I think of the women in *purdah*, cut off from the outside world, I invariably think of a prison or a zoo! How can a nation go ahead if half of its population is kept hidden away in a kind of prison? Tear the *purdah*, and let each one of us see the light of day!

Fortunately, India is rapidly tearing the *purdah*. Even Moslem society has largely rid itself of this terrible burden. In Turkey, Kamal Pasha has put an end to it completely; in Egypt it is going fast.

One thing more and I shall finish this letter. The Arabs, especially at the beginning of their awakening, were full of enthusiasm for their faith. Yet they were a tolerant people and there are numerous instances of this toleration in religion. In Jerusalem the Khalifa Omar made a point of it. In Spain there was a large Christian population which had the fullest liberty of conscience. In India, the Arabs never ruled except in Sindh, but there were frequent contacts and the relations were friendly. Indeed, the most noticeable thing about this period of history is the contrast between the toleration of the Muslim Arab and the intolerance of the Christian in Europe.

50

BAGHDAD AND HARUNAL-RASHID

May 27, 1932

Let us carry on the story of the Arabs before reverting to other countries.

For nearly a hundred years, as I told you in my last letter, the Caliphs belonged to the Ommeyade branch of the Prophet Mohammad's family. They ruled from Damascus, and during their rule the Muslim Arabs took the standard of Islam far and wide. While the Arabs conquered in distant lands, they quarrelled at home and there was frequent civil war. Ultimately the Ommeyades were overthrown by another branch of Mohammad's family, descended from his uncle Abbas, and hence called the Abbasides. The Abbasides came as avengers of the cruelties of the Ommeyades, but they excelled them in cruelty and massacre after their victory was won. They hunted out all the Ommeyades they could find and killed them in a barbarous way.

This was the beginning in 750 A.C. of the long reign of the Abbaside Caliphs. It was not a very happy or auspicious beginning, and yet the Abbaside period is a bright enough period in Arab history. But there were great changes now from the days of the Ommeyades. The civil war in Arabia shook up the whole of the Arab Empire. The Abbasides won at home, but in far Spain, the Arab governor was an Ommeyade and he refused to recognize the Abbaside Caliph. North Africa, or the viceroyalty of Ifrikia as it was called, also became more or less independent soon after. And Egypt did likewise, and indeed went so far as to proclaim another Caliph. Egypt was near enough to be threatened and forced to submit, and this was done from

time to time. But Ifrikia was not interfered with, and as for Spain it was much too far for any action. So we see that the Arab Empire split up on the accession of the Abbasides. The Caliph was no longer the head of the whole Moslem world, he was not now the Commander of all the Faithful. Islam was no longer united, and the Arabs in Spain and the Abbasides disliked each other so much that each often welcomed the misfortunes of the other.

In spite of all this, the Abbaside Caliphs were great sovereigns and their empire was a great empire, as empires go. The old faith and energy which conquered mountains and spread like a prairie fire was no more in evidence. There was no simplicity and little of democracy left, and the Commander of the Faithful was little different from the Persian King of Kings, who had been defeated by the earlier Arabs, or the Constantinople Emperor. In the Arabs of the time of Mohammad the Prophet, there was a strange life and strength which was very different from the strength of kings' armies. They stood out in the world of their time and armies and princes crumpled up before their irresistible march. The masses were weary of these princes and the Arabs seemed to bring the promise of change for the better and of social revolution to them.

All this was changed now. The men of the desert lived in palaces now, and instead of dates had the most gorgeous foods. They were comfortable enough, so why bother about change and social revolution? They tried to rival the old empires in splendour and they got many an evil custom of theirs. One of these, as I told you, was the seclusion of women.

The capital now went from Damascus to Baghdad in Iraq. This change of capital itself was significant, for Baghdad used to be the summer retreat of the Persian King. And Baghdad was further away from Europe than Damascus. Henceforth the Abbasides looked more towards Asia than to Europe. There were to be still many attempts to capture Constanti-

nople, and there were many wars with European nations. But most of these wars were defensive. The days of conquest seem to have ended and the Abbaside Caliphs tried to consolidate such of the empire as was left to them. This was great enough even without Spain and Africa.

Baghdad! Do you not remember it? And Harunal-Rashid and Shaherazade and the wonderful stories contained in the *Arabian Nights*? The city that now grew up under the Abbaside Caliphs was the city of the *Arabian Nights*. It was a vast city of palaces and public officers and schools and colleges, and great shops, and parks and gardens. The merchants carried on a vast trade with the East and West. Crowds of government officials kept in continuous touch with the distant parts of the empire. Government becoming more and more complicated, was divided up into many departments. An efficient postal system connected all the corners of the empire to the capital. Hospitals abounded. Visitors came to Baghdad from all over the world, especially there came learned men and students and artists, for it was known that the Caliph welcomed all who were learned or who were skilful in the arts.

The Caliph himself lived in great luxury surrounded by slaves, and his womenfolk had taken to the *harem*. The Abbaside Empire was at the height of its outward glory during the reign of Harunal-Rashid from 786 to 809 A.C. Embassies came to Harun from the Emperor of China and Emperor Charlemagne in the West. Baghdad and the Abbaside dominions were far in advance of the Europe of those days, except for Arab Spain, in all the arts of government, in trade, and in the development of learning.

The Abbaside period is especially interesting for us because of the new interest in science which it started. Science, as you know, is a very big thing in the modern world. We owe such a lot to science. Science does not simply sit down and pray for things to happen. It is

curious to find out why things happen. It experiments and tries again and again, and sometimes fails and sometimes succeeds—and so bit by bit it adds to human knowledge. The modern world of ours is very different from the ancient world or the Middle Ages. This great difference is largely due to science. The modern world has been made by science.

Among the ancients we do not find the scientific method in Egypt or China or India. We find just a bit of it in old Greece. In Rome again it is absent. But the Arabs had this scientific spirit of enquiry and so they may be considered the fathers of modern science. In some subjects, like medicine and mathematics, they learnt much from India. Indian scholars and mathematicians came in large numbers to Baghdad. Many Arab students went to Takshashila in north India, which was still a great university, specializing in medicine. Sanskrit books on medical and other subjects were especially translated into Arabic. Many things, for example paper making, the Arabs learnt from China. But on the basis of the knowledge gained from others they made their own researches and made several important discoveries. They made the first telescope and the mariner's compass. In medicine, Arab physicians and surgeons were famous all over Europe.

Baghdad was of course the great centre of all these intellectual activities. In the West, Cordoba, the capital of Arab Spain, was another centre. There were many other university centres in the Arab world, where the life of the intellect flourished—there was Cairo or al-Qahira, "the Victorious," Basra and Kufa. But over all these famous cities towered Baghdad, "the capital of Islam, the eye of Iraq, the seat of empire, the centre of beauty, culture and arts," as an Arab historian describes it. It had a population of over two millions and thus was nearly double the size of modern Calcutta or Bombay.

It may interest you to know that the habit of wearing socks and stockings is said to have begun in

Baghdad among the rich. They were called "mozas," and the Hindustani word for them must be derived from this. So also the French "chemise" which comes from "kamis," a shirt. Both the *kamis* and the *moza* went from the Arabs to the Byzantines in Constantinople and from there to Europe.

The Arabs had always been great travellers. They continued their long journeys across the seas and established colonies in Africa, on the coasts of India, in Malaysia and even in China. One of their famous travellers was Alberūnī who came to India and left, like Hiuen Tsang, a record of his travels.

The Arabs were also historians and we know a great deal about them from their own books and histories. And all of us know what fine stories and romances they could write. Thousands and thousands of people have never heard of the Abbaside Khalifas and of their empire but they know of Baghdad of the *Alf Laila wa Laila*, the "Thousand and one Nights," the city of mystery and romance. The empire of the imagination is often more real and more lasting than the empire of fact.

Soon after the death of Harunal-Rashid trouble came to the Arab Empire. There were disorders and different parts of the empire fell away, the provincial governors becoming hereditary rulers. The Caliphs became more and more powerless, till a time came when a Caliph ruled over the city of Baghdad only and a few villages around it. A Caliph was even dragged out of his palace by his own soldiery and killed. Then for a while some strong men rose who ruled from Baghdad and made the Caliph a dependent of theirs.

Meanwhile the unity of Islam was a thing of the distant past. Separate kingdoms arose everywhere from Egypt to Khorasan in Central Asia. And from further east still came the nomad tribes west. The old Turks of Central Asia became Moslems and came and took possession of Baghdad. They are known as the Seljuq Turks. They defeated the Byzantine army of Constantinople, utterly much to the surprise of Europe. For

Europe had thought that the Arabs and Moslems had spent their strength and were getting weaker and weaker. It was true that the Arabs had declined greatly, but the Seljuq Turks now came on the scene to uphold the banner of Islam and to challenge Europe with it.

This challenge was soon taken up, as we shall see, and the Christian nations of Europe organized crusades to fight the Moslems and reconquer Jerusalem, their holy city. For over a hundred years Christianity and Islam fought for mastery in Syria and Palestine and Asia Minor and exhausted each other, and soaked every yard almost of the soil of these countries with human blood. And the flourishing cities of these parts lost their trade and greatness and the smiling fields were often converted into a wilderness.

So they fought each other. But even before their fighting was over, across Asia in Mongolia there arose Chengiz Khan, the Mogul, Shaker of the Earth, as he was called, who was indeed going to shake Asia and Europe. He and his descendants finally put an end to Baghdad and its empire. By the time the Mongols had finished with the great and famous city of Baghdad, it was almost a heap of dust and ashes and most of its two million inhabitants were dead. This was in 1258 A.C.

Baghdad is now again a flourishing city and is the capital of the State of Iraq. But it is but a shadow of its former self. It never recovered from the death and desolation which the Mongols brought.

51

FROM HARSHA TO MAHMUD IN NORTH INDIA

June 1, 1932

We must interrupt our story of the Arabs or Saracens and have a look at other countries. What was happening in India, in China, in the countries of Europe, while the Arabs grew in power and conquered and spread and then declined? Some little glimpses we have already had—the defeat of the Arabs at Tours in France in 732 by a joint army under Charles Martel, their conquest of Central Asia, and their coming up to Sindh in India. Let us first go to India.

Harsha-Vardhana of Kanauj died in 648 A.C. and with his death the political degeneration of north India became more obvious. For some time past this had been going on, and the conflict between Hinduism and Buddhism had helped the process. During Harsha's time there was outwardly a brave show, but for a while only. After him a number of small States grew up in the north, sometimes enjoying a brief glory, sometimes quarrelling with each other. It is curious that even in these three hundred years or more after Harsha, art and literature flourished and there were many fine public works constructed. Several famous Sanskrit writers, like Bhavabhuti and Rajasekhara, lived in these times, and several kings, not important politically, were famous for the art and learning which grew under them. One of these rulers—Raja Bhoja—has become almost a mythical type of the model king, and even to-day people refer to him as such. Have you not heard the saying about Raja Bhoja and Ganga Teli?

But in spite of these bright spots the North was

declining. South India was again taking the lead and overshadowing the North. I have told you a little of the South in these days in a previous letter (44); of the Chalukyas, and the Chola Empire, and the Pallavas, and the Rashtrakutas. I have also told you of Shankaracharya, who in a short life managed to impress both the learned and the unlearned all over the country, and succeeded in putting an end almost to Buddhism in India. Strange that even as he did so a new religion should knock at the gates of India, and later come in a flood of conquest, to challenge the existing order in India!

The Arabs reached the borders of India soon enough, even while Harsha was alive. They stopped there for a while and then took possession of Sind. In 710 a young boy of 17, Mohammad ibn Kasim commanding an Arab army conquered the Indus valley up to Multan in the west Punjab. This was the full extent of the Arab conquest of India. Perhaps if they had tried hard enough they might have gone further. It should not have been difficult as north India was weak. But, although there was plenty of fighting going on between these Arabs and the neighbouring rulers, there was no organized attempt at conquest. Politically therefore this Arab conquest of Sind was not an important affair. The Muslim conquest of India was to come several hundred years later. But culturally the contact of the Arabs with the people of India had great results.

The Arabs had friendly relations with the Indian rulers of the South, especially the Rashtrakutas. Many Arabs settled along the west coast of India and built mosques in their settlements. Arab travellers and traders visited various parts of India. Arab students came in large numbers to the northern University of Takshashila or Taxila, which was especially famous for medicine. It is said that in the days of Harunal-Rashid Indian scholarship had a high place in Baghdad. Physicians from India came to organize hospitals and medical schools. Sanskrit books on mathematics and astronomy

were translated into Arabic.

Thus the Arabs took much from the old Indo-Aryan culture. They took also much from the Aryan culture of Persia, and also something from Hellenic culture. They were almost like a new race, in the prime of their vigour, and they took advantage of all the old cultures they saw around them, and learnt from them; and on this foundation they built something of their very own—the Saracenic culture. This had a comparatively brief life, as cultures go, but it was a brilliant life, which shines against the dark background of the Middle Ages in Europe.

It is strange to find that while the Arabs profited by their contacts with Indo-Aryan, Persian, and Hellenic cultures, Indians and Persians and Greeks did not profit much by their contacts with the Arabs. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the Arabs were new and full of vigour and enthusiasm, while the others were old races, going along the old ruts, and not caring over much for change. It is curious how age seems to have the same effect on a people or a race as it has on an individual—it makes them slow of movement, inelastic in mind and body, conservative and afraid of change.

So India was not greatly affected or much changed by this contact with the Arabs which lasted for some hundreds of years. But during this long period India must have got to know something of the new religion, Islam. Moslem Arabs came and went and built mosques, and sometimes preached their religion, and sometimes even converted people. There seems to have been no objection to this in those days, no trouble or friction between Hinduism and Islam. It is interesting to note this as in later days, friction and trouble did arise between the two religions. It was only when in the eleventh century Islam came to India in the guise of a conqueror, with a sword in hand, that it produced a violent reaction, and the old toleration gave way to hatred of each other and conflict.

This wielder of the sword who came to India with

fire and slaughter was Mahmud of Ghazni. Ghazni is now a little town in Afghanistan. Round about Ghazni grew up a State in the tenth century. Nominally the Central Asian States were under the Caliph of Baghdad but, as I have told you already, after Harunal-Rashid's death the Caliph weakened and a time came when his empire split up into a number of independent States. This is the period of which we are now speaking. A Turkish slave named Subuktagin carved a State for himself round Ghazni and Kandahar about 975 A.C. He raided India also. In those days a man named Jaipal was Raja of Lahore. Very venturesome, Jaipal marched to the Kabul valley against Subuktagin and got defeated.

Mahmud succeeded his father Subuktagin. He was a brilliant general and was a fine cavalry leader. Year after year he raided India and sacked and killed and took away with him vast treasure and large numbers of captives. Altogether he made seventeen raids. Only one of these—into Kashmir—was a failure. The others were successful and he became a terror all over the north. He went as far south as Pataliputra, Mathura and Somnath. From Thaneshwara he took away, it is said, two hundred thousand captives and vast wealth. But it was in Somnath where he got the most treasure. For here was one of the great temples and the offerings of centuries had accumulated. It is said that thousands of people took refuge in the temple, when Mahmud approached, in the hope that a miracle would happen and the god they worshipped would protect them. But miracles seldom occur, except in the imaginations of the faithful, and the temple was broken and looted by Mahmud and fifty thousand people perished, waiting for the miracle which did not happen.

Mahmud died in 1030 A.C. The whole of the Punjab and Sind was under his sway at the time. He is looked upon as a great leader of Islam who came to spread Islam in India. Most Moslems adore him; most Hindus hate him. As a matter of fact, he was hardly

a religious man. He was a Mohammedan of course, but that was by the way. Above everything he was soldier, and a brilliant soldier. He came to India to conquer and loot, as soldiers unfortunately do, and he would have done so to whatever religion he might have belonged. It is interesting to find that he threatened the Moslem rulers of Sind and only on their submission and payment of tribute did he spare them. He even threatened the Caliph at Baghdad with death and demanded Samarkand from him. We must therefore not fall into the common error of considering Mahmud as anything but a successful soldier.

Mahmud took large numbers of Indian architects and builders with him to Ghazni and built a fine mosque there which he called the "Celestial Bride." He was very fond of gardens.

Of Mathura, Mahmud has given us a glimpse, which shows us what a great city it was. Writing to his governor at Ghazni, Mahmud says: "There are here (at Mathura) a thousand edifices as firm as the faith of the faithful; nor is it likely that this city has attained its present condition but at the expense of many millions of *dinars*, nor could such another be constructed under a period of two hundred years."

This description of Mathura by Mahmud we read in an account given by Firdausi. Firdausi was a great Persian poet who lived in Mahmud's time. I remember mentioning his name and the name of his chief work, the *Shāhnāmah*, in one of my letters to you last year. There is a story that the *Shāhnāmah* was written at the request of Mahmud who promised to pay him a gold *dinar* (a coin) for every couplet of verses. But Firdausi apparently did not believe in conciseness or brevity. He wrote at tremendous length, and when he produced his many thousands of couplets before Mahmud, he was praised for his work, but Mahmud regretted the rash promise of payment he had made. He tried to pay him something much less and Firdausi was very angry and refused to accept anything!

We have taken a long step from Harsha to Mahmud, and surveyed three hundred and fifty years and more of Indian history in a few paragraphs. I suppose much could be said of this long period which would be interesting. But I am ignorant of it and so it is safer for me to preserve a discreet silence. I could tell you something of various kings and rulers who fought each other and sometimes even established large kingdoms in north India, like the Panchala Kingdom; of the trials of the great city of Kanauj; how it was assailed and captured for a while by the rulers of Kashmir, and then by the king of Bengal, and later still by the Rashtrakutas from the south. But this record would serve little purpose and would only confuse you.

We have now arrived at the end of a long chapter of Indian history, and a new one begins. It is difficult, and often enough wrong, to divide up history into compartments. It is like a flowing river; it goes on and on. Still it changes and sometimes we can see the end of a phase and the beginning of another. Such changes are not sudden; they shade off into each other. So we reach the end of an act in the unending drama of history, so far as India is concerned. What is called the Hindu period is gradually drawing to a close; the Indo-Aryan culture which had flourished for some thousands of years has to struggle now against a new-comer. But remember that this change was not sudden. It was a slow process. Islam came to the North with Mahmud. The South was not touched by Islamic conquest for a long time to come, and even Bengal was free from it for nearly two hundred years more. In the North we find Chittor, which was to be so famous in after history for its reckless gallantry, becoming a rallying point for Rajput clans. But surely and inexorably the tide of Muslim conquest spread and no amount of individual courage could stop it. There can be no doubt that the old Indo-Aryan India was on the decline.

Being unable to check the foreigner and the conqueror, Indo-Aryan culture adopted a defensive attitude.

It retired into a shell in its endeavours to protect itself. It made its caste system, which till then had an element of flexibility in it, more rigid and fixed. It reduced the freedom of its womenfolk. Even the village *panchāyats* underwent a slow change for the worse. And yet even as it declined before a more vigorous people, it sought to influence them and mould them to its own ways. And such was its power of absorption and assimilation that it succeeded in a measure in bringing about the cultural conquest of its conquerors.

You must remember that the contest was not between the Indo-Aryan civilization and the highly civilized Arab. The contest was between civilized but decadent India and the semi-civilized and occasionally nomadic people from Central Asia who had themselves been recently converted to Islam. Unhappily, India connected Islam with this lack of civilization and with the horrors of Mahmud's raids, and bitterness grew.

52

THE COUNTRIES OF EUROPE TAKE SHAPE

June 3, 1932

Shall we pay a visit to Europe now, my dear? When we were there last it was in a bad way. The collapse of Rome had meant the collapse of civilization in western Europe. In eastern Europe, except for that part of it which was under the Constantinople government, conditions were even worse. Attila the Hun had spread fire and destruction over a good part of the Continent. But the Eastern Roman Empire, though declining, had endured and had even shown occasional bursts of energy.

In the West things began to settle down in a new way after the shake-up which the fall of Rome gave. It took a long time to settle down. But one can just make out the new pattern as it develops. Christianity spreads, helped sometimes by its saints and men of peace, sometimes by the sword of its warrior kings. New kingdoms rise up. In France and Belgium and part of Germany the Franks (whom you must not confuse with the French yet) formed a kingdom under a ruler named Clovis who ruled from 481 to 511 A.C. This is called the Merovingian line from the name of Clovis's grandfather. But these kings were soon put into the shade by an official of their own court—the Mayor of the Palace. These mayors became all-powerful and became hereditary mayors. They were the real rulers, the so-called kings were just puppets.

It was one of these Mayors of the Palace, Charles Martel, who defeated the Saracens at the great battle of Tours in France in 732 A.C. By this victory he stopped the Saracen wave of conquest and, in Christian eyes, he

saved Europe. His prestige and reputation gained greatly by this. He was looked up to as the champion of Christendom against the enemy. The Popes of Rome were not then on good terms with the Constantinople Emperor. So they began to look up to Charles Martel for help. His son Pepin decided to call himself king and remove the puppet who was there and the Pope of course gladly agreed.

Pepin's son was Charlemagne. The Pope was in trouble again and he invited Charlemagne to come to his rescue. Charles did so and drove away his enemies, and on Christmas day 800 A.C. there was a great ceremony in the Cathedral when the Pope crowned Charlemagne Roman Emperor. From that day began the Holy Roman Empire of which I wrote to you once before.

It was a strange empire and its future history is stranger still, as it vanishes gradually, like the Cheshire cat in Alice, leaving just the smile behind with no trace of body. But this was yet to come and we need not pry into the future.

This Holy Roman Empire was not a continuation of the old Western Roman Empire. It was something different. It considered itself *the* Empire, the Emperor being boss over everybody else in the world—except perhaps the Pope. Between the Emperor and Pope there was for many centuries a contest as to who was the greater. But this also belongs to the future. What is interesting to note is that this new empire was supposed to be a revival of the old Roman Empire, when this was supreme and Rome was said to be the mistress of the world. But to this was added a new idea—that of Christianity and Christendom. Hence the empire was "holy." The Emperor was supposed to be a kind of Viceroy of God on earth, and so was the Pope. One dealt with political matters, the other with spiritual. This was the idea at any rate, and it was from this, I suppose, that the idea of the Divine right of kings arose in Europe. The Emperor was the Defender of the

Faith. You will be interested to know that the English King is still styled the Defender of the Faith.

Compare this Emperor with the Khalifa or Caliph, who was styled the Commander of the Faithful. The Khalifa was really an emperor and Pope combined, to begin with. Later, as we shall see, he became just a figurehead.

The Constantinople emperors of course did not at all approve of this newly-arisen 'Holy Roman Empire' in the west. At the time Charlemagne was crowned, a woman, Irene, had made herself Empress at Constantinople. She was the creature who killed her own son to become Empress, and things were in a bad way in her time. This was one of the reasons which emboldened the Pope to break away from Constantinople by crowning Charlemagne.

Charlemagne was now the head of western Christendom, the Viceroy of God on earth, the Emperor of a holy empire. How pompous these phrases sound, but they serve their purpose by deluding and hypnotizing the people. By calling God and religion to its help, authority has often enough sought to fool others and increase its own power. The king and the emperor and the high priest become, for the average person, vague and shadowy beings, almost like the gods, far removed from ordinary life. And this mystery makes him afraid of them. Compare the elaborate codes and etiquettes and ceremonial of courts with the equally elaborate ceremonial of worship in temple or church. There is the same bowing and scraping and prostration—kow-towing as the Chinese say. From childhood up we are taught this worship of authority in various forms. It is the service of fear, not of love.

Charlemagne was the contemporary of Harunal-Rashid of Baghdad. He corresponded with him, and, note this, he actually suggested an alliance between the two to fight the Eastern Roman Empire as well as the Saracens in Spain. Nothing seems to have come of this suggestion but even so it throws a flood of light on the

working of the minds of kings and politicians. Imagine the 'holy' Emperor, the head of Christendom joining hands with the Caliph at Baghdad against a Christian power and an Arab power. You will remember that the Saracens of Spain had refused to recognize the Abbaside Caliphs of Baghdad. They had become independent and Baghdad had a grievance against them. But they were too far for conflict. Between Constantinople and Charlemagne there was also not much love lost. Here also distance prevented any actual fighting. None the less the proposal was made for the Christian and the Arab to join together to fight another Christian and another Arab power. The real motives at the back of kings' minds were those of gaining power and authority and wealth, but religion was often made the cloak for this. Everywhere this has been so. In India we saw Mahmud coming in the name of religion but making a good thing out of it. The cry of religion has paid often enough.

But people's ideas change from age to age and it is very difficult for us to judge of others who lived long ago. We must remember this. Many things that seem obvious to us to-day would have been very strange to them, and their habits and ways of thinking would seem strange to us. While people talked of high ideals, and the Holy Empire and the Viceroy of God and the Pope who was Vicar of Christ, conditions in the West were as bad as they could well be. Soon after Charlemagne, Italy and Rome were in a disgraceful condition. A disgusting lot of men and women did what they liked in Rome and made and unmade Popes.

Indeed it was the general disorder in western Europe which had prevailed since the fall of Rome, that induced many people to think that if the Empire was revived, conditions would improve. It became also a matter of prestige with many that they should have an emperor. One old writer of those days says that Charles was made emperor "lest the pagans should insult the Christians, if the name of Emperor should have

ceased among the Christians."

Charlemagne's empire included France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, half Germany and half Italy. To the south-west of it was Spain under the Arabs; to the north-east were the Slav and other tribes; to the north the Danes and Northmen, to the south-east the Bulgarians and Serbians, and beyond them the Eastern Roman Empire under Constantinople.

Charlemagne died in 814 and soon after troubles arose for a division of the spoils of empire. His descendants, who are called the Carlovingians (Carolus, the Latin for Charles), were not upto much as can be gathered from the titles of some of them: the Fat, the Bald, the Pious. From the division of Charlemagne's empire we now see Germany and France shaping themselves. Germany is supposed to date as a nation from 843 A.C. and it is said that it was the Emperor Otto the Great, who reigned from 962 to 973, who made the Germans more or less a single people. France was already no part of Otto's empire. In 987 Hugh Capet drove away the feeble Carlovingian kings and obtained control of France. This was not much in the way of control as France was divided up into big areas under independent nobles and they often fought each other. But they feared the Emperor and Pope more than each other and united to resist them. With Hugh Capet begins France as a nation, and even in these early beginnings we can see the rivalry between France and Germany, which has endured for a thousand years right up to our day. Strange that two neighbouring countries and peoples so cultured and highly endowed as the French and the Germans should go on nursing this ancient feud from generation to generation. But perhaps the fault is not so much theirs as that of the systems under which they have lived.

About this time Russia also comes upon the stage in history. Rurik, a man from the north, is said to have laid the foundations of the Russian State about 850 A.C. In the south-east of Europe we find the Bul-

garians settling down, and indeed becoming rather aggressive; and the Serbians. The Magyars or Hungarians and the Poles also begin to form States between the Holy Roman Empire and the new Russia.

Meanwhile, from north Europe men came down in ships to the western and southern countries and burned and killed and looted. You have read of the Danes and other Northmen who went to England to harry and sack. But these Northmen or Norsemen or Normans, as they came to be called, went to the Mediterranean, sailed up the big rivers on their ships, and wherever they went they robbed and killed and looted. There was anarchy in Italy, and Rome was in a deplorable condition. They sacked Rome, and threatened even Constantinople. These robbers and plunderers seized the west of France, where Normandy is, and South Italy and Sicily, and gradually settled down there and became lords and landowners, as robbers often do when they are prosperous. It was these Normans from Normandy in France that went and conquered England in 1066 A.C. under William, known as the Conqueror. So we see England also taking shape.

We have now arrived roughly at the end of the first millennium or thousand years of the Christian era in Europe. About this time Mahmud of Ghazni was raiding India, and about this time the Abbaside Caliphs of Baghdad were breaking up and the Seljuq Turks were reviving Islam in west Asia. Spain continued to be under the Arabs but they were cut off completely from their homelands in Arabia, and indeed were not on good terms with the Baghdad rulers. North Africa was practically independent of Baghdad. In Egypt there was not only an independent government but a separate Caliphate, and for some time the Egyptian Caliph ruled over north Africa even.

53

THE FEUDAL SYSTEM

June 4, 1932

In our last letter we had a glimpse of the beginnings of France and Germany and Russia and England, as we know them to-day. But do not imagine that people in those days thought of these countries in the same way as we do now. We think of different nations, of Englishmen and Frenchmen and Germans, and each one of these thinks of his country as his motherland or fatherland or *patrie*. This is the feeling of nationality which is so obvious in the world to-day. Our struggle for freedom in India is our 'national' struggle. But this idea of nationality did not exist in those days. There was some idea of Christendom, of belonging to a group or society of Christians as against the heathen or Moslems. In the same way the Moslems had the idea of belonging to the world of Islam as against all others who were unbelievers.

But these ideas of Christendom and Islam were vague notions which did not touch the daily life of the people. Only on especial occasions were they worked up to fill the people with religious zeal to fight for Christianity or Islam as the case might be. Instead of nationality there was a peculiar relation between man and man. This was the feudal relation arising out of what is known as the Feudal System. After the downfall of Rome the old order in the West had collapsed. There was disorder and anarchy and violence and force everywhere. The strong seized what they could and held on to it as long as a stronger person did not come to throw them out. Strong castles were built and the lords of these castles went out with raiding parties and

harried the countryside, and sometimes fought others like themselves. The poor peasants and workers on the land of course suffered the most. Out of this disorder grew up the Feudal System.

The peasants were not organized. They could not defend themselves against these robber-barons. There was no central government strong enough to protect them. So they made the best of a bad job and came to terms with the lord of the castle who plundered them. They agreed to give him part of what they produced in their fields and also to serve him in some ways, provided he would not plunder them and harass them and would protect them from others of his kind. The lord of the small castle, in the same way came to terms with the bigger castle. But the little lord could not give the big lord the produce of the field as he was not a peasant or a producer. So he promised to give him military service, that is, to fight for him whenever need arose. In return the big one was to protect the little one, and the latter was the vassal of the lord. And so, step by step, they went up to yet bigger lords and nobles till at last they arrived at the king at the top of this feudal structure. But they did not stop even there. To them even heaven had its own bit of the feudal system with its Trinity, presided over by God!

This was the system that grew up gradually out of the disorder that prevailed in Europe. You must remember that there was practically no central government at the time; there were no policemen or the like. The owner of a piece of land was the governor and lord of it as well as of all people who lived upon it. He was a kind of little king and was supposed to protect them in return for their service and part of the produce of their fields. He was the liege-lord of these people who were called villeins or serfs. In theory, he held his land from his superior lord, whose vassal he was and to whom he gave military service.

Even the officials of the Church were parts of the feudal system. They were both priests as well as feudal

lords. Thus, in Germany nearly half the land and wealth were in the hands of the bishops and abbots. The Pope was himself a feudal lord.

This whole system, you will notice, was one of gradations and classes. There was no question of equality. At the bottom were the villeins or serfs and they had to carry the whole weight of the social structure—the little lords and the big lords, and the bigger lords and the king. And the whole cost of the Church—of the bishops and abbots and cardinals and ordinary priests—fell on them also. The lords, little or big, did not do any work which might produce food or any other kind of wealth. This was considered beneath them. Fighting was their chief occupation, and when not so engaged, they hunted or indulged in mock-fights and tournaments. They were a rough and illiterate lot who did not know many ways of amusing themselves besides fighting and eating and drinking. Thus the whole burden of producing the food and the other necessaries of life fell on the peasants and the artisans. At the top of the whole system was the king who was supposed to be a kind of vassal of God.

This was the idea behind this feudal system. In theory, the lords were bound to protect their vassals and serfs. In practice, they were a law unto themselves. Their superiors or the king seldom checked them, and the peasantry were too weak to resist their demands. Being far the stronger, they took from their serfs the utmost they could and barely left them enough to carry on a miserable existence. That has been the way of owners of land always and in every country. The ownership of land has given nobility. The robber knight who seized land and built a castle became a noble lord respected by everybody. This ownership has also given power, and the owner has used this power to take away as much from the peasant and the producer or the worker as he could. Even the laws have helped the owners of land for the laws have been made by them and their friends. And this is the reason why many

people think that land should not belong to individuals but to the community. If it belongs to the state or community, that means that it belongs to all who live there, and no one can then exploit others on it, or get an unfair advantage.

But these ideas were yet to come. Of the time that we are speaking of people did not think along these lines. The masses of the people were miserable but they saw no way out of their difficulties. They put up with them therefore and carried on their life of hopeless labour. The habit of obedience had been dinned into them, and once this is done people will put up with almost anything. So we find a society growing up consisting of the feudal lords and their retainers on the one side and the very poor on the other. Round the stone castle of the lord would cluster the mud or wooden huts of the serfs. There were two worlds, far removed from each other—the world of the lord and the world of the serf, and the lord probably considered the serf as only some degrees removed from the cattle he tended.

Sometimes the smaller priests tried to protect the serfs from their lords. But as a rule the priests and clergy sided with the lords, and as a matter of fact the bishops and abbots were themselves feudal lords.

In India we have not had this kind of feudal system, but we have had something similar to it. Indeed, our Indian States with their rulers and nobles and lordlings still preserve many feudal customs. The Indian caste system, though wholly different from the feudal system, yet divided society into classes. In China, as I think I have told you, there has never been any autocracy or privileged class of this kind. By their ancient system of examinations they laid open the gate to the highest office to each individual. But of course in practice there may have been many restrictions.

In the feudal system there was thus no idea of equality or of freedom. There was an idea of rights and obligations, that is a feudal lord received as his right service and produce of the land; and considered it as his

obligation to give protection. But rights are always remembered and obligations are often ignored. We have even now great land-owners in some Europeans countries and in India. They take enormous sums as rent from their tenants, without doing a scrap of work, but all idea of any obligation has long been forgotten.

It is strange to notice how the old barbarian tribes of Europe who were so fond of their freedom gradually resigned themselves to this feudal system which denied it completely. These tribes used to elect their chiefs and to hold them in check. Now we find despotism and autocracy everywhere and no question of election. I cannot say why this change occurred. It may be that the doctrines spread by the Church helped the spread of undemocratic ideas. The king became the shadow of God on earth and how can you disobey or argue with even the shadow of the Almighty? The feudal system seemed to include heaven and earth in its fold.

In India also we find the old Aryan ideas of freedom gradually changing. They become weaker and weaker till they are almost forgotten. But in the early Middle Ages as I showed you, they were still remembered to some extent, as the *Nītisāra* of Shukracharya and the South Indian inscriptions tell us.

Some freedom slowly came to Europe again through the new forms that were rising up. Besides the owners of land and those who worked on it, the lords and their serfs, there were other classes of people—artisans and traders. These people, as such, were no parts of the feudal system. In the period of disorder there was little enough trade and handicrafts did not flourish. But gradually trade increased and the importance of master-craftsmen and merchants grew. They became wealthy and the lords and barons went to them to borrow money. They lent the money, but they insisted on the lords allowing them certain privileges. These privileges added to their strength. So we find now instead of the serfs' huts clustering round the lord's castle, little towns

growing up with houses all round a cathedral or church or guild-hall. The merchants and artisans formed guilds or associations and the headquarters of these associations became the guild-halls. These guild-halls then became the town-halls. Perhaps you remember seeing the Guildhall of London.

These cities that were growing up—Cologne and Frankfurt and Hamburg and many others—became rivals of the power of the feudal lords. A new class was growing up in them, the merchant and trading class, which was wealthy enough to defy even the nobles. It was a long struggle. Often the king, afraid of the power of his own nobles and barons, sided with the cities. But I am going too far ahead.

I began this letter by telling you that there was no feeling of nationality in those days. People thought of their duty and allegiance to their superior lord. They had taken the oath to save him, not the country. Even the king was a vague person, too far away. If the lord rebelled against the king that was his look-out. His vassals had to follow him. This was very different from the idea of nationality which was to come much later.

54

CHINA PUSHES THE NOMADS TO THE WEST

June 5, 1932

I have not written to you about China and the far eastern countries for a long time, nearly a month, I think. We have discussed many changes in Europe and India and western Asia; we have watched the Arabs spread out and conquer many lands; and Europe fall back into darkness and struggle to come out of it. All this time China was of course carrying on and, as a rule, carrying on rather well. In the seventh and eighth centuries, China under the Tang kings was probably the most civilized and prosperous and the best governed country in the world. Europe, of course, could not be compared with it as it was very backward after the collapse of Rome. North India was at a low ebb for most of the time. She had her bright periods, as when Harsha ruled, but on the whole she was going downhill. South India was certainly more vigorous than the North; and across the seas her colonies, Angkor and Sri Vijaya were on the eve of a great period. The only states that could rival China during this period in some respects were the two Arab States of Baghdad and Spain. But even these were at the height of their glory for a comparatively short period. It is interesting to note however that a Tang Emperor, who had been driven away from his throne, appealed to the Arabs for help, and it was through their help that he regained power.

So China was well in the van of civilization in those days and could with some justification regard the Europeans of the time as a set of semi-barbarians. In the known world she was supreme. I say the known world

because I do not know what was happening then in America. This we know that both in Mexico and in Peru and the neighbouring countries civilizations had been existing for several hundred years. In some respects they were remarkably advanced; in other respects they appear to have been equally remarkably backward. But I know so little about them that I dare not say much. I should like you, however, to keep them in mind—the Maya civilization of Mexico and Central America, and the Peruvian State of the Incas. Others, wiser than I am, may tell you something worthwhile about them. I must confess that they fascinate me, but my fascination is only equalled by my ignorance of them.

Another matter I should like you to remember. We have seen in the course of our letters that many nomadic tribes have appeared in Central Asia and gone west to Europe or descended on India. The Huns, the Scythians, the Turks, and so many others have gone, one after another, in wave after wave. You will remember the White Huns who came to India and Attila's Huns in Europe. The Seljuq Turks who took possession of the Baghdad Empire also came from Central Asia. Later another branch of the Turks—the Ottoman Turks—were to come and finally conquer Constantinople and go right up to the walls of Vienna. Out of Central Asia or Mongolia also were to come the terrible Mongols who conquered right up to the heart of Europe, and even brought China under their rule; and one of whose descendants was to found a dynasty and an empire in India which was to produce some famous rulers.

With these nomadic tribes of Central Asia and Mongolia, China waged ceaseless war. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that these nomads were almost always giving trouble to China, and China was obliged to defend itself. It was to protect itself against these that the Great Wall was built. It did some good no doubt, but it was poor enough protection against raids. Emperor after emperor had to drive back the nomads,

and it was in this process of driving back that the Empire of China spread far in the west, right up to the Caspian Sea, as I have told you. The Chinese people were not given over much to imperialism. Some of their emperors were certainly imperialists and ambitious of conquest. But compared to many other peoples, they were peace-loving and not fond of war and conquest. The learned man in China has always had more honour and glory than the warrior. If in spite of this, the Chinese Empire became very extensive at times, it was largely due to irritation against the continuous pin-pricks and raids of the nomads to the north and west. The strong emperors drove them far to the west to get rid of them once for all. They did not solve the question for ever but they got some relief at least.

But the relief the people of China got was at the expense of other peoples and countries. For the nomads who were driven by the Chinese went and attacked other countries. They came to India. They went to Europe again and again. The drives of the Han Emperors of China gave other countries the Huns and the Tartars and other nomads; the Tangs presented the Turks to Europe.

So far the Chinese had succeeded to a large extent in defending themselves from these nomadic tribes. We shall now come to a period when they were not so successful.

The Tang dynasty, as always happens with these dynasties everywhere, gradually tapered off into a number of incompetent rulers, who had none of the strong points of their predecessors but only their love of luxury. Corruption spread in the State and this was accompanied by heavy taxation, which of course fell mostly on the poorer classes. Discontent increased and at the beginning of the tenth century, in 907 A.C., the dynasty fell.

For half a century there was a succession of petty and unimportant rulers. In 960 A.C. however, another of China's big dynasties begins. This was the

Sung dynasty founded by Kao-Tsu. But trouble, both at the frontiers and in the interior of China, continued. The heavy land taxes were a great burden on the peasantry and were much resented. As in India, the whole land system was too much of a burden for the people, and there could be no peace or progress till this was completely changed. But it is always difficult to make these root and branch changes. The people at the top profit by the existing system and shout a lot when change is proposed. We are hearing and seeing quite enough of this in our country, and especially in our province. But if the change is not made in time and in reason, it has a habit of coming without invitation and of upsetting the whole apple cart!

The Tang dynasty fell because it did not make the necessary changes. The Sungs had continuous troubles also because of this. One man arose who might have succeeded. He was Wang An-Shih, a prime minister of the Sungs in the eleventh century. China was, as I have told you, a land governed by the ideas of Confucius. All officials had to pass examinations in the Confucian classics, and nobody dare go against anything that Confucius had said. Wang An-Shih did not go against them but he interpreted them in a remarkable way. That is a way clever people have of getting round a difficulty. Some of Wang's ideas were remarkably modern. His whole object was to lessen the burden of taxation on the poor and increase it on the rich who could afford to pay. He lowered the land taxes and permitted the peasants to pay them in kind, that is in grain or other produce, if they found payment in money difficult. On the rich he levied an income-tax. This is supposed to be quite a modern tax and yet we find it proposed in China nine hundred years ago. To help the farmers Wang proposed that the Government should lend them money which could be repaid at harvest time. Another difficulty which had to be got over was the rise and fall of the price of grain. I wonder if you know how much our peasantry in India have suffered during

the last two years because of the tremendous fall in the price of grain and other things they produce. When the market price falls in this way the poor peasants can get very little for the produce of their fields. They cannot sell it, and thus have no money to pay taxes or to buy anything. Wang An-Shih, wiser than the present British Government in India, tried to face this problem. He suggested that government should buy and sell grain to keep the price from rising and falling.

Wang also proposed that there should be no forced labour for public works. Every man who worked must be paid his full wage. He also instituted a local militia called the Pao Chia. But Wang was unfortunately too far ahead of his times and after a while his reforms lapsed. Only the militia continued for more than eight hundred years.

Not bold enough to solve the problems that faced them the Sungs gradually succumbed to them. The northern barbarians, the Khitans, were too much for them. Unable to drive them back they asked another tribe from the north-west—the Kins or the Golden Tartars—to come to their help. The Kins came and drove out the Khitans. But they stayed themselves and refused to budge! That is often the fate of a weak person or country seeking aid from a strong one. The Kins made themselves masters of northern China and made Peking their capital. The Sungs retired to the south and went on shrinking before the advancing Kins. Thus there was a Kin Empire in north China and a Sung Empire in south China. These Sungs were called the Southern Sungs. The Sung Dynasty in the north lasted from 960 to 1127 A.C. The Southern Sungs ruled in south China for a hundred and fifty years till the Mongols came and put an end to them in 1260 A.C. But China, as India of old, retaliated by absorbing and assimilating even the Mongols and making them almost typical Chinamen.

So China succumbed at last to the nomad tribes. But even in the process of doing so it civilized them and

so did not suffer from them as other parts of Asia and Europe did.

The Sungs in the north and in the south were not politically as powerful as their predecessors the Tangs. But they carried on the artistic tradition of the great days of the Tangs and indeed improved upon it. South China under the Southern Sungs excelled in art and poetry and beautiful paintings were made, especially of scenes from nature, for the Sung artists loved nature. Porcelain also appears, made beautiful by the touch of the artist's fingers. This was to become more and more beautiful and wonderful till two hundred years later, under the Ming monarchs, marvellously fine porcelain was produced. A vase of the Ming period in China is even to-day a thing of rare delight.

55

THE SHOGUN RULES IN JAPAN

June 6, 1932

From China it is easy to cross the Yellow Sea and visit Japan, and now that we are so near to it we might as well do so. Do you remember our last visit? We saw the rise of great families fighting for mastery, and a central government coming more and more into evidence. The emperor from being a chief of a big and powerful clan becomes the head of the central government. Nara, the capital, is established as a symbol of central authority. And then the capital is changed to Kyoto. Chinese methods of government are copied and much is taken from or *via* China—art, religion, politics. Even the name of the country—Dai Nippon—comes from China.

We saw also a powerful family—the Fujiwara family—seizing all power and treating the emperors as puppets. For two hundred years they ruled till the emperors got rather fed up and abdicated and entered monasteries. But inspite of becoming a monk the ex-emperor interfered a great deal in the affairs of government by advising the reigning emperor who was his son. By this method the emperors managed to get round the Fujiwara family to some extent. It was rather a complicated way of doing things, but anyhow it succeeded in reducing the power of the Fujiwaras. The real power lay with the emperors who abdicated one after the other and became monks. They are called, therefore, the Cloistered Emperors.

Meanwhile, however, other changes took place and a new class of large land-holders who were also military men arose. The Fujiwaras had created these landholders

and asked them to collect taxes for the government. They were called "Daimyos", which means "great names". It is curious to compare this with the rise of a similar class in our province just before the British came. In Oudh, especially, the king who was a feeble ninny appointed tax-collectors. These people kept little armies of their own to help them to collect forcibly and of course they kept most of the collections for themselves. These tax-collectors in some case developed into the big taluqdars.

The Daimyos became very powerful with their retainers and little armies and fought each other and ignored the central government at Kyoto. The two chief Daimyo families were the Taira and the Minamoto. They helped the emperor in suppressing the Fujiwaras in 1156 A.C. But then they went bitterly for each other. The Tairas won and perhaps to make sure that the rival family would not trouble them in future, they killed them. They killed all the leading Minamotos except four children, one of these being a twelve-year boy Yoritomo. The Taira family inspite of their attempts had not been thorough enough. This boy Yoritomo, who was spared as of no great consequence, grew up a bitter enemy of the Taira family, full of the desire for vengeance. He succeeded. He drove them out of the capital and then smashed them up at a naval battle.

Yoritomo now became all powerful and the emperor gave him the high-sounding title of Sei-i-tai-Shogun, which means the Barbarian-subduing-great-general. This was in 1192 A.C. The title was hereditary and with it went full power to govern. The Shogun was the real ruler. In this way began the Shogunate in Japan. It was to last a very long time, nearly seven hundred years, almost to recent times when modern Japan was to rise out of her feudal shell.

But this does not mean that Yoritomo's descendants ruled as Shoguns for 700 years. There were several changes in the families out of which Shoguns came.

There was civil war repeatedly, but the system of the Shogun being the real ruler, and governing in the name of an emperor, who had little or no power, continued for this long period. Often, it so happened, that even the Shogun became a mere figurehead and a number of officials held the power.

Yoritomo was afraid of living in the luxury of the capital, Kyoto, as he felt that soft living would weaken him and his colleagues. So he established his military capital at Kamakura, and this first Shogunate is called therefore the Kamakura Shogunate. It lasted till 1333, that is for nearly a hundred and fifty years. Japan had peace during most of this period. After the many years of civil wars the peace was very welcome and there was an era of prosperity. The condition of Japan during this period was certainly much better and the government was more efficient than that of any country of contemporary Europe. Japan was an apt pupil of China, although there was a vast difference in the two outlooks. China, as I have said, was an essentially peaceful and quiet country. Japan on the other hand, was an aggressive military country. In China a soldier was looked down upon and the trade of fighting not considered very honourable; in Japan the topmost men were soldiers, and the ideal was that of a Daimyo or fighting knight. China perhaps, like India, was too old a country to hanker after fighting. One usually wants peace and repose in old age!

So Japan took much from China but took it in its own way and adopted and moulded everything to suit its racial genius. Intimate contacts with China continued and so did trade, chiefly on Chinese ships. There was a sudden stop to this towards the end of the thirteenth century for the Mongols had come to China and Korea. The Mongols even attempted to conquer Japan, but they were repulsed. Thus the Mongols, who changed the face of Asia and shook Europe, had no marked effect on Japan. Japan carried on in her old way, cut off even more than before from external influences.

There is a story in the old official annals of Japan of how the cotton plant first came to the country. It is said that some Indians who were shipwrecked near the coast of Japan brought the cotton seeds in 799 A.C.

The tea plant came later. It was first introduced early in the ninth century but it had no success then. In 1191 a Buddhist monk brought seeds of the tea plant from China and very soon tea became popular. This drinking of tea created a demand for fine pottery. Late in the 13th century a Japanese potter went to China to study the art of making porcelain. He spent six years there. On his return he started making fine Japanese porcelain. Tea-drinking now is a fine art in Japan and there is an elaborate ceremonial about it. When you go to Japan you must drink it the right way or you will be considered a bit of a barbarian!

56

THE QUEST OF MAN

June 10, 1932

Four days ago I wrote to you from Bareilly Jail. That very evening I was told to gather up my belongings and to march out of the prison—not to be discharged, but to be transferred to another prison. So I bade good-bye to my companions of the barrack, where I had lived for just four months, and I had a last look at the great twenty-four foot wall under whose sheltering care I had sat for so long, and I marched out to see the outside world again for a while. There were two of us being transferred. They would not take us to Bareilly station lest people might see us, for we have become *purdahnashins* and may not be seen! Fifty miles out they drove us by car to a little station in the wilderness. I felt thankful for this drive. It was delightful to feel the cool night air and to see the phantom trees and men and animals rush by in the semi-darkness, after many months of seclusion.

We were coming to Dehra Dun. Early in the morning we were again taken out of our train, before we had reached the end of our journey, and taken by car lest prying eyes should see us.

And so here I sit in the little jail of Dehra Dun and it is better here than at Bareilly. It is not quite so hot and the temperature does not rise to 112 degrees, as it did in Bareilly. And the walls surrounding us are lower and the trees that overlook them are greener. In the distance I can even see, over our wall, the top of a plam tree, and the sight delights me and makes me think of Ceylon and Malabar. Beyond the trees there lie the mountains, not many miles away, and, perched up on top

of them, sits Mussoorie. I cannot see the mountains, for the trees hide them, but it is good to be near them and to imagine at night the lights of Mussoorie twinkling in the far distance.

Four years ago—or is it three?—I began writing these series of letters to you when you were at Mussoorie. What a lot has happened during these three or four years and how you have grown! With fits and starts and after long gaps I have continued these letters, mostly from prison. But the more I write the less I like what I write; and a fear comes upon me that these letters may not interest you much and may even become a burden for you. Why then should I continue to write them?

I should have liked to place vivid images of the past before you, one after another, to make you sense how this world of ours has changed, step by step, and developed and progressed, and sometimes apparently gone back; to make you see something of the old civilizations and how they have risen like the tide and then subsided; to make you realize how the river of history has run on from age to age, continuously, interminably, with its eddies and whirlpools and backwaters, and still rushes on to an unknown sea. I should have liked to take you on man's trail and follow it up from the early beginnings, when he was hardly a man, to to-day, when he prides himself so much, rather vainly and foolishly, on his great civilization. We did begin that way, you will remember, in the Mussoorie days, when we talked of the discovery of fire and of agriculture, and the settling down in towns and the division of labour. But the further we have advanced, the more we have got mixed up with empires and the like, and often we have lost sight of that trail. We have just skimmed over the surface of history. I have placed the skeleton of old happenings before you and I have wished to have the power to cover it with flesh and blood, to make it living and vital for you.

But I am afraid I have not got that power and you must rely upon your imagination to work the miracle.

Why then should I write when you can read about past history in many good books? Yet, through my doubts I have continued writing and I suppose I shall still continue. I remember the promise I made to you and I shall try to fulfil it. But more even than this is the joy that the thought of you gives me when I sit down to write and imagine that you are by me and we are talking to each other.

Of man's trail I have written above, since he emerged stumbling and slouching from the jungle. It has been a long trail of many thousands of years. And yet how short a time it is if you compare it to the earth's story and the ages and æons of time before man came. But for us man is naturally more interesting than all the great animals that existed before him; he is interesting because he brought a new thing with him which the others do not seem to have had. This was mind—curiosity—the desire to find out and learn. So from the earliest days began man's quest. Observe a little baby, how it looks at the new and wonderful world about it; how it begins to recognize things and people; how it learns. Look at a little girl; if she is a healthy and wide-awake person she will ask so many questions about so many things. Even so in the morning of history when man was young and the world was new and wonderful, and rather fearsome to him, he must have looked and stared all around him, and asked questions. But who was he to ask except himself? There was no one else to answer. But he had a wonderful little thing—a mind—and with the help of this, slowly and painfully, he went on storing his experiences and learning from them. So from the earliest times uptil to-day man's quest has gone on, and he has found out many things but many still remain, and as he advances on his trail, he discovers vast new tracts stretching out before him, which show to him how far he is still from the end of his quest—if there is such an end.

What has been this quest of man and whither does he journey? For thousands of years men have tried to

answer these questions. Religion and philosophy and science have all considered them and given many answers. I shall not trouble you with these answers for the sufficient reason that I do not know most of them. But, in the main, religion has attempted to give a complete and a dogmatic answer, and has often cared little for the mind but has sought to enforce obedience to its decisions in various ways. Science gives a doubting and hesitating reply for it is of the nature of science not to dogmatize but to experiment and reason and rely on the mind of man. I need hardly tell you that my preferences are all for science and the methods of science.

We may not be able to answer these questions about man's quest with any assurance, but we can see that the quest itself has taken two lines. Man has looked outside himself as well as inside; he has tried to understand Nature, and he has also tried to understand himself. The quest is really one and the same, for man is part of nature. "Know thyself," said the old philosophers of India and Greece; and the *Upanishads* contain the record of the ceaseless and rather wonderful strivings after this knowledge by the old Aryan Indians. The other knowledge of Nature has been the special province of science and our modern world is witness to the great progress made therein. Science indeed is spreading out its wings even further now and taking charge of both lines of this quest and co-ordinating them. It is looking up with confidence to the most distant stars, and it tells us also of the wonderful little things in continuous motion—the electrons and protons—of which all matter consists.

The mind of man has carried man a long way in his voyage of discovery. As he has understood Nature more he has utilized it and harnessed it to his own advantage, and thus he has won more power. But unhappily he has not always known how to use this new power, and he has often misused it. Science itself has been used by him chiefly to supply him with terrible weapons to kill his brother and destroy the very civilization he has built up with so much labour.

57

THE END OF THE FIRST MILLENNIUM AFTER CHRIST

June 11, 1932

It may be worth while for us to stop a little at the stage we have reached in our journey and have a look round. How far have we got? Where are we now? And what does the world look like? Let us then take seats on Aladin's Magic Carpet and pay brief visits to various parts of the world of that day.

We have travelled through the first millennium or thousand years of the Christian era. In some countries we have gone on a little ahead, and in some we are a little behind this stage.

In Asia, we see China under the Sung dynasty. The great Tang dynasty is over, and the Sungs have to face both domestic trouble and foreign attack from the northern barbarians, the Khitans. For a hundred and fifty years they hold on but then they are weak enough to ask for the help of another barbarian tribe, the Golden Tartars or Kins. The Kins come and stay and the poor Sungs have to shrink away to the south where, as the Southern Sungs, they carry on for another hundred and fifty years. Meanwhile beautiful arts, painting and porcelain-making, flourish.

In Korea, after a period of division and conflict, a united independent kingdom was established in 935 A.C. and this lasted for a long time—about four hundred and fifty years. From China, Korea takes much of her civilization and art and methods of government. Religion and also something of art goes to her, as well as to Japan, from India, through China. Japan, situated far to the East, almost like a sentinel of Asia, carries on her

existence, more or less cut off from the rest of the world. The Fujiwara family is supreme and the Emperor, who has recently become something more than a clan chief, is kept in the shade. Later comes the Shogun.

In Malaysia the Indian colonies flourish. Angkor the magnificent is the capital of Cambodia and this State is at the height of its power and development. In Sumatra, Sri Vijaya is the capital of a great Buddhist Empire which controls all the eastern islands and carries on an extensive trade between them. In Eastern Java there is an independent Hindu State which was soon to grow and, competing with Sri Vijaya for trade and the wealth that trade brings, was to wage bitter war with it, as the modern European nations do for trade, and was ultimately to conquer and destroy it.

In India, north and south are cut off from each other more than they had been for some time. In the north, Mahmud of Ghazni sweeps down again and again and destroys and plunders. He carries away vast wealth and attaches the Punjab to his kingdom. In the south, we find the Chola Empire expanding and gaining in power under Rajaraja and his son Rajendra. They dominate the south of India and their navies sweep the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. They carry out aggressive expeditions of conquest to Ceylon, South Burma and Bengal.

In Central and Western Asia we see the remnants of the Abbaside Empire of Baghdad. Baghdad still flourishes, and indeed is increasing in power under a new set of rulers, the Seljuq Turks. But the old empire split up into many kingdoms. Islam had ceased to be one empire and had become merely the religion of many countries and peoples. Out of the wreck of the Abbaside Empire had arisen the kingdom of Ghazni which Mahmud had ruled and from which he had swooped down on India. But though the empire of Baghdad had broken up, Baghdad itself continued to be a great city attracting artists and learned men from distant places. Many great and famous cities also flourished in Central

Asia at the time—Bokhara, Samarkand, Balkh and others. An extensive trade was carried on between them and great caravans carried merchandise from one to the other.

In Mongolia and round about it, new tribes of nomads were growing in number and in power. Two hundred years later they were to sweep across Asia. Even now the dominant races in Central and Western Asia had come from that Central Asian breeding-ground of nomads. The Chinese had driven them west and they had spread, some down to India, some to Europe. We now find the Seljuq Turks, driven west, reviving the fortunes of the Baghdad Empire, and attacking and defeating the Eastern Roman Empire of Constantinople.

So much for Asia. Across the Red Sea was Egypt, independent of Baghdad. The Moslem ruler there had declared himself a separate Caliph. North Africa is also under independent Moslem rule. Across the straits of Gibralter in Spain, there is also an independent Moslem State, the Emirate of Kurtuba or Cordoba. About this I shall have to tell you something later. But you know already that Spain refused to submit to the Abbaside Caliphs when they came to power. Ever since then it was independent. Its attempts to conquer France had, long before, been checkmated by Charles Martel. It was now the turn of Christian States in the north part of Spain to attack the Moslems and they attacked with more and more confidence as time went on. But, at the time we are speaking of, the Emirate of Cordoba was a great and progressive State, far in advance of the countries of Europe, in civilization and science.

Europe, apart from Spain, was divided up now into a number of Christian States. Christianity had by this time spread all over the continent and the old religions of heroes and gods and goddesses had almost vanished from Europe. We can see the modern countries of Europe taking shape. France appears under Hugh Capet in 987. In England, Canute the Dane, who is

famous for his command to the waves of the sea to go back, ruled in 1016, and fifty years later William the Conqueror came from Normandy. Germany was part of the Holy Roman Empire but it was definitely becoming one country, although it was divided up into many smaller States. Russia was spreading in the east and often threatening Constantinople with her ships. This was the beginning of the strange fascination for Constantinople which Russia has always felt. She has coveted this great city for a thousand years and hoped at last to get it as the result of the Great War which ended fourteen years ago. But the Revolution came suddenly and upset all the plans of old Russia.

You will also see in the map of Europe of nine hundred years ago Poland and Hungary, where the Magyars lived, and the kingdoms of the Bulgarians and Serbs. And, of course, you will see the Eastern Roman Empire surrounded by a host of enemies, but still carrying on. The Russians attacked it, the Bulgarians annoyed it, the Normans harassed it continually by sea, and now most dangerous of all the Seljuq Turks threatened its very life. But it was not going to collapse for another four hundred years, in spite of all these enemies and difficulties. This amazing persistence is partly explained by the strength of the position of Constantinople. It was so well situated that it was difficult for an enemy to take it. Partly also it is explained by the discovery by the Greeks of a new method of defence. This was what was called "Greek Fire;" it was some stuff which caught fire when it touched water. By means of this Greek fire the people of Constantinople played havoc with the invading armies which tried to cross the Bosphorus and set fire to their ships.

Such was the map of Europe after the first thousand years of the Christian era. You would have found also the Northmen or Normans coming down in their ships and harassing and plundering towns on the sea coasts in the Mediterranean and ships on the high seas. They were indeed becoming respectable by success. In France

they had established themselves in Normandy on the west; England they had conquered from their base in France; the island of Sicily they conquered from the Moslems and added to it South Italy, making a kingdom called the kingdom of Sicilia.

In the centre of Europe, from the North Sea to Rome, sprawled the Holy Roman Empire, consisting of many States with one head, the Emperor. Between this German Emperor and the Pope of Rome there was a continuous tussle for mastery. Sometimes the Emperor prevailed, sometimes the Pope, but gradually the Popes increased in power. With their threat of excommunication, that is, to cast a man out of society and make an outlaw of him, they had a terrible weapon. One proud Emperor indeed was brought so low by the Pope of the day that to beg forgiveness he had to go barefoot in the snow and to wait thus outside the Pope's residence at Canossa in Italy till the Pope was kind enough to admit him!

We would see these countries of Europe fashioning out, but they will be very different from what they are to-day, and especially their people would be different. They would hardly speak of themselves as Frenchmen, or Englishmen, or Germans. The poor cultivators were a miserable lot and knew nothing of country or geography. All they knew was that they were the serfs of their lord and must do the lord's bidding. The nobles, if you asked them who they were, would tell you that they were the lords of this or that place and the vassals of some superior lord or of the king. This was the Feudal System which spread all over Europe.

Gradually we find large cities growing in Germany and north Italy especially. Paris also was a prominent city then. These cities are the centres of trade and commerce and wealth accumulates there. The cities do not like the feudal lords and there is always a tussle between the two, but money tells in the end. With the help of their money, which they lend to the lords, they buy privileges and power. And so slowly a new class

grows in the city which does not fit in with the feudal system.

Thus we find that society in Europe is divided up in layers according to the feudal pattern and even the Church gives its sanction and blessing to this order. There is no feeling of nationality. But there is a certain feeling all over Europe, especially amongst the upper classes, an idea of Christendom, some thing which unites the Christian nations of Europe. The Church helps to spread this idea, for it strengthens the Church and increases the power of the Pope of Rome, who is now the unquestioned head of the Church in western Europe. You will remember that Rome had cut itself away from Constantinople and the Eastern Roman Empire. Constantinople still continued its old Orthodox Church and Russia also took its religion from them. The Pope was not recognized by the Greeks of Constantinople.

But in the hour of peril, when Constantinople was surrounded by enemies, and more especially threatened by the Seljuq Turks, it forgot its pride and its hatred of Rome, and appealed to the Pope for help against the Moslem infidel. Rome had a great Pope then—Hildebrande, who became Pope Gregory the Seventh. It was Hildebrande before whom the proud German Emperor had appeared barefoot in the snow at Canossa.

Another event had excited the imagination of Christian Europe then. Many devout Christians believed that the world would come to a sudden end just a thousand years after Christ. The word millennium means a thousand years. It comes from two Latin words: *mille* meaning thousand, and *annus*, year. As the end of the world was expected then the millennium came to mean a sudden change to a better world. As I have told you, there was great misery then in Europe and this prospect of the "millennium" brought relief to many a weary person. Many sold up their lands and journeyed to Palestine to be present in their Holy Land when the end of the world came.

But the end of the world did not come, and the

thousands of pilgrims who had journeyed to Jerusalem were ill-treated and harassed by the Turks. They returned to Europe full of anger and humiliation and spread the story of their sufferings in the Holy Land. One famous pilgrim, Peter the Hermit, especially went about, staff in hand, preaching to the people to rescue their holy city Jerusalem from the Moslems. Indignation and enthusiasm grew in Christendom, and seeing this the Pope decided to lead the movement.

About this time had come the appeal from Constantinople for help against the infidel. All Christendom, both Roman and Greek, now seemed to be ranged against the oncoming Turks. In 1095 a great Church Council decided to proclaim a holy war against the Moslems for the recovery of the Holy City of Jerusalem. Thus began the Crusades—the Fight of Christendom against Islam, of the Cross against the Crescent.

58

ANOTHER LOOK AT ASIA AND EUROPE

June 12, 1932

We have finished our brief survey of the world—of Asia and Europe and a bit of Africa—at the end of a thousand years after Christ. But look again.

Asia. The old civilizations of India and China still continue and flourish. Indian culture spreads to Malaysia and Cambodia and brings rich fruit there. Chinese culture spreads to Korea and Japan and, to some extent, Malaysia. In western Asia, Arabian culture prevails in Arabia, Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia; in Persia, there is a mixture of the old Persian and the newer Arabian civilization. Some of the countries of Central Asia have also imbibed this mixed Persian-Arabian civilization, and have also been influenced by India and China. In all these countries there is a high level of civilization; trade and learning and the arts flourish; great cities abound; famous universities attract students from afar. Only in Mongolia and in some parts of Central Asia, as well as in Siberia in the north, was the level of civilization low.

Europe now. It is backward and semi-barbarous compared to the progressive countries of Asia. The old Græco-Roman civilization is just a memory of the distant past. Learning is at a discount; the arts are not much in evidence; and trade is far less than in Asia. There are two bright spots. Spain, under the Arabs, carried on the traditions of the great days of the Arabs, and Constantinople, even in her slow decay, was a great and populous city, sitting on the border, between Asia and Europe. Over the greater part of Europe there is frequent disorder and, under the feudal system which

prevails, each knight and lord is a little king in his domain. Rome, the imperial capital of old, at one time was hardly bigger than a village, and wild animals lived in its old Colosseum. But it was growing again.

So if you compared the two, Asia and Europe, a thousand years after Christ, the comparison would have been greatly to the advantage of Asia.

Let us have another look and try to see below the surface of things. We find that it is not so well with Asia as a superficial observer might imagine. India and China, the two cradles of ancient civilization, are in trouble. Their troubles are not merely those of invasion from outside, but the more real troubles which sap away the inner life and strength. The Arabs in the west have come to the end of their great days. It is true that the Seljuqs rise to power, but their rise is simply due to their fighting qualities. They do not, like the Indians or Chinese or Persians or Arabs, represent the culture of Asia, but the fighting quality of Asia. Everywhere in Asia the old cultured races seem to be shrinking. They have lost confidence in themselves and are on the defensive. New peoples arise, strong and full of energy, who conquer these old races in Asia, and even threaten Europe. But they do not bring a new wave of civilization with them or a new impetus for culture. The old races slowly civilize them and assimilate their conquerors.

So we see a great change coming over Asia. While the old civilizations continue and the fine arts flourish and there are refinements in luxury, the pulse of civilization weakens, and the breath of life seems to grow less and less. For long they were to continue. There was no definite break or end to them, except in Arabia and Central Asia when the Mongols came. In China and India there is a slow fading off, till the old civilization becomes like a painted picture, beautiful to look at from a distance but lifeless; and if you come near it, you see that the white-ants have been at it.

Civilizations, like empires, fall, not so much because

of the strength of the enemy outside, as the weakness and decay within. Rome fell not because of the barbarians; they merely knocked down something that was already dead. The heart of Rome had ceased beating when the arms and legs were cut off. We see something of this process in India and China and in the case of the Arabs. The collapse of Arabian civilization was sudden, even as their rise had been. In India and China the process is long-drawn-out and it is not easy to spot it.

Long before Mahmud of Ghazni came to India this process had started. We can see the change in the minds of the people. Instead of creating new ideas and things, the people of India busied themselves with repetition and imitation of what had been done. Their minds were keen enough still, but they busied themselves in interpreting and explaining what had been said and written long ago. They still produced wonderful sculpture and carvings, but they were heavy with too much detail and ornament, and often almost a touch of the grotesque crept in. Originality was absent and so was bold and noble design. The polished graces and arts and luxury continued among the rich and the well-to-do, but little was done to relieve the toil and misery of the people as a whole or to increase production.

All these are the signs of the evening of a civilization. When this takes place you may be sure that the life of that civilization is vanishing; for creation is the sign of life, not repetition and imitation.

Some such processes are in evidence in China and India then. But do not mistake me. I do not mean that China or India cease to be because of this or relapse into barbarism. I mean that the old push of creative spirit that China and India had received in the past was exhausting its energy and not renewing itself. It was not adapting itself to changed surroundings; it was merely carrying on. This happens with every country and civilization. There are periods of great creative effort and growth and periods of exhaustion. It is

amazing that in India and China the exhaustion came so late, and even so it has never been complete.

Islam brought a new impulse for human progress to India. To some extent it served as a tonic. It shook up India. But it did less good than it might have done because of two reasons. It came in the wrong way and it came rather late. For hundreds of years before Mahmud of Ghazni raided India, Moslem missionaries had wandered about India and had been welcomed. They came in peace and had some success. There was little, if any, ill-feeling against Islam. Then came Mahmud with fire and sword and the manner of his coming as a conqueror and a plunderer and killer injured the reputation of Islam in India more than anything else. He was of course just like any other great conqueror, killing and plundering, and caring little for religion. But for a very long time his raids overshadowed Islam in India and made it difficult for people to consider it dispassionately as they might otherwise have done.

This was one reason. The other was that it came late. It came about four hundred years after it began and during this long period it had exhausted itself somewhat, and lost a great deal of its creative energy. If the Arabs had come to India with Islam in the early days, the rising Arabian culture would have mixed with the old Indian and the two would have acted and reacted on each other, with great consequences. It would have been the mixing of two cultured races; and the Arabs were well-known for their toleration and rationalism in religion. At one period indeed there was a club in Baghdad, under the patronage of the Caliph, where men of all religions and no religion met together to discuss and debate about all matters from the point of view of rationalism alone.

But the Arabs did not come to India proper. They stopped in Sind, and India was little influenced by them. Islam came to India through the Turks and others who did not have the tolerance or the culture of the Arab,

and who were primarily soldiers.

Still a new impulse came to India for progress and creative effort. How this put some new life in India and then worked itself out, we shall consider later.

Another result of the weakening of Indian civilization is now in evidence. Attacked from outside, it sought to defend itself against the incoming tide by building a shell round itself and imprisoning itself almost. This again was a sign of weakness and fear; and the remedy only increased the disease. The real disease was not foreign invasion but stagnation. By this exclusiveness the stagnation grew and all avenues of growth were stopped. Later we shall see that China did this also in its own way, and so did Japan. It is a little dangerous to live in a society which is closed up like a shell. We petrify there and grow unaccustomed to fresh air and fresh ideas. Fresh air is as necessary for societies as for individuals.

So much for Asia. Europe we saw was backward and quarrelsome at that time. But behind all this disorder and uncouthness you can detect energy at least and life. Asia, after her long dominance was on the down grade; Europe was struggling up. But she had still far to go before she could come up anywhere near Asia's level.

To-day Europe is dominant and Asia struggles painfully for freedom. Yet look below the surface again. You will find a new energy in Asia, a new creative spirit, and a new life. Asia is up again, there can be no doubt. And Europe, or rather western Europe, in spite of her greatness shows some signs of decay. There are no barbarians who are strong enough to destroy European civilization. But sometimes civilized people themselves act barbarously and if this happens civilization may destroy itself.

I talk of Asia and Europe. But they are just geographical expressions and the problems that face us are not Asiatic or European problems but world-problems or problems of humanity. And unless we

solve them for the whole world, there will continue to be trouble. Such a solution can only mean the ending of poverty and misery everywhere. This may take a long time but we must aim at this and at nothing less than this. Only then can we have real culture and civilization based on equality, where there is no exploitation of any country or class. Such a society will be a creative and a progressive society, adapting itself to changing circumstances, and basing itself on the co-operation of its members. And ultimately it must spread all over the world. There will be no danger of such a civilization collapsing or decaying as the old civilizations did.

So while we struggle for the freedom of India, we must remember that the great aim is human freedom, which includes the freedom of our people as well as other peoples.

59

THE MAYA CIVILIZATION OF AMERICA

June 13, 1932

In these letters I am trying to trace world history, so I tell you. But in effect this has been the history of Asia and Europe and the north of Africa. Of America and Australia I have said nothing, or next to nothing. I have warned you however that there was a civilization in America in these early days. Not much is known of this, and I certainly know very little indeed. Still I cannot resist the temptation to tell you something about it here, so that you may not make the common mistake of thinking that America was just a savage country till Columbus and other Europeans reached there.

Probably as long ago as the Stone Age, before man had settled down anywhere and was a wanderer and hunter, there was land communication between Asia and North America. Groups and tribes of men must have passed from one continent to another *via* Alaska. Later these communications were cut off and the men in America slowly developed their own civilization. Remember that, so far as we know, there was nothing to connect them with Asia or Europe. I have told you the story of the Chinese monk who said he had visited a land far to the east of China in the fifth century. This may have been Mexico. But apart from this there are no accounts of any effective contacts till the so-called discovery of the New World late in the sixteenth century. This world of America was a distant and different world, uninfluenced by the happenings in Europe or Asia.

It appears that there were three centres of civilization: in Mexico, in Central America, and in Peru. It is

not clear when they started but the Mexican calendar began with a date corresponding with 613 B.C. We find in the early years of the Christian era, the second century onwards, already many cities growing. There is stone work and pottery and weaving and very fine dyeing. Copper and gold are abundant but there is no iron. Architecture develops and the cities vie with each other in building. There is a special kind of rather intricate writing. Art, and especially sculpture, is much in evidence and is of considerable beauty.

There were several States in each of these areas of civilization. There were several languages and a considerable literature in them. Well-organized and strong governments existed and the cities contained a cultured and intellectual society. Both the legislation and the financial system of these States were highly developed. About 960 A.C. the city of Uxmal was founded and, it is said that this soon developed into a great city comparable to the great cities of Asia in those days. There were also other large cities: Labua, Mayapan, Chaomultun.

The three leading States of Central America formed an alliance, which is now called the League of Mayapan. This was just about a thousand years after Christ, the period we have reached in Asia and Europe. So a millennium after Christ there was a powerful combination of civilized States in Central America. But all these States and the Maya civilization itself were priest-ridden. Astronomy was the science most honoured, and the priests by their knowledge of this science played on the ignorance of the people. Just as millions in India have been induced to bathe and fast during eclipses of the sun and moon.

For over a hundred years the League of Mayapan lasted. There appears to have been a social revolution then and a foreign power from the border intervened. About 1190 A.C. Mayapan was destroyed. The other great cities however continue. In another hundred years another people come upon the scene. These were the

Aztecs from Mexico. Early in the fourteenth century they conquer the Maya country and about 1325 A.C., they found the city of Tenochlitlan. Soon this becomes the capital city of the whole Mexican world, the centre of the Empire of the Aztecs, with a vast population.

The Aztecs were a military nation. They had military colonies and garrisons, and a network of military roads. It is even said that they were clever enough to make their dependent states quarrel with each other. It was easier to rule them if they were divided. That has been the old policy of all empires. Rome called it: *Divide et impera*—divide and rule.

The Aztecs, in spite of their cleverness in other matters, were also priest-ridden, and, worse still, their religion was full of human-sacrifice. Thousands of human beings were sacrificed in this way in a most horrible manner every year.

For nearly two hundred years the Aztecs ruled their empire with a rod of iron. There was outward security and peace in the empire—just as there is the Pax Britannica in India!—but the people were ruthlessly exploited and impoverished. A State so built and so carried on could not endure. And so it happened. Early in the sixteenth century (in 1519), when the Aztecs were apparently at the height of their power, the whole empire came down with a crash before a handful of foreign bandits and adventurers! This is one of the most amazing examples of the collapse of an empire. And this was done by a Spaniard, Hernan Cortés, and a small troop with him. Cortés was a brave man and daring enough. He had two things which were of great help to him—firearms and horses. Apparently there were no horses in the Mexican Empire, and there were certainly no firearms. But neither Cortés' courage nor his guns and horses would have availed him if the Aztec Empire had not been rotten at heart. It had decayed inside, just keeping the outer form, and even a little kick was enough to bring it down. The empire was

based on exploitation and was much resented by the people. So when it was attacked, the people at large welcomed the discomfiture of the imperialists. As usual, when this happens, there was a social revolution also.

Cortés was once driven away and he barely escaped with his life. But he returned and then, helped by some of the inhabitants, he conquered. Not only did he end the Aztec rule but, it is curious to find, that the whole of Mexican civilization collapsed with it, and soon, of the imperial and giant city of Tenochlitlan, little was left. Not a stone remains of it now, and on the site of it the Spaniards erected a cathedral. The other great Mayan cities also went to pieces and the forests of Yucatan engulfed them, till even their names were forgotten, and many of them are now remembered by the names of villages near by. All their literature also perished and only three books survive, and even these no one has so far been able to read!

It is extraordinarily difficult to explain this sudden disappearance of an ancient people and an ancient civilization, which had lasted for nearly fifteen hundred years, as soon as they come in contact with the new people from Europe. Almost it seems as if this contact was of the nature of a disease, a new plague, for them, and it wiped them off. With all their high civilization in some respects, they were very backward in other respects. They were a curious mixture of the various periods of history.

In South America there was another seat of civilization in Peru, and the Inca ruled it. He was a kind of divine monarch. It is strange that this Peruvian civilization was, in its later days at least, completely cut off from the Mexican civilization. They were not far from each other. Yet they knew nothing of each other, and this itself shows their remarkable backwardness in some respects. A Spaniard also put an end to this Peruvian State soon after Cortés had succeeded in Mexico. This was Pizarro. He came in 1530 and he seized the Inca by treachery. The seizure of the "divine" monarch itself terrified the people. Pizarro

tried to rule in the name of the Inca for some time and extorted vast wealth. Later this pretence was ended and the Spaniards made Peru a part of their dominions.

When Cortés first saw the city of Tenochlitlan he was astounded at its greatness. He had seen nothing like it in Europe.

Many relics of Maya and Peruvian art have been recovered and can be seen in American museums, especially, I think, in Mexico. There was a fine artistic tradition. The Peruvian goldsmith's work is said to be superb. Some of the pieces of sculpture found, especially some serpents in stone, are very fine. Others are apparently meant to be works of horror and they do horrify!

60

A JUMP BACK TO MOHENJO-DARO

June 14, 1932

I have just been reading about Mohenjo-daro and the old Indus Valley civilization of India. A great new book has come out describing this and telling us all that is so far known about it. It has been prepared and written by the men who have been in charge of the excavations and diggings, and who have themselves seen the city come out, as it were, of mother Earth, as they dug deeper and deeper. I have not seen this book yet. I wish I could get it here. But I have read a review of it, and I want to share with you some of the quotations given in it. It is a wonderful thing, this civilization of the Indus Valley, and the more one learns of it, the more it amazes. So you will not mind, I hope, if we break our account of past history and jump back in this letter to five thousand years ago.

Mohenjo-daro is said to be as old as that at least. But Mohenjo-daro, as we find it, is a fine city, the home of a cultured and civilized people. Behind it there must have been a long period of growth already. So we are told by this book. Sir John Marshall, who is in charge of the excavations tells us:

"One thing that stands out clear and unmistakable both at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, is that the civilization hitherto revealed at these two places is not an incipient civilization, but one already age-old and stereotyped on Indian soil, with many millennia of human endeavour behind it. Thus India must henceforth be recognised, along with Persia, Mesopotamia, and Egypt as one of the most important areas where the civilizing processes were initiated and developed."

I do not think I have told you of Harappa yet. This is another place where old ruins, similar to those at Mohenjo-daro, have been excavated. It is in the west Punjab.

So we find that in the Indus Valley we go back not only five thousand years but many more thousands, till we are lost in the dim mists of antiquity when man first settled down. The Aryans had not come to India when Mohenjo-daro flourished, and yet there is no doubt that "the Punjab and Sind, if not other parts of India as well, were enjoying an advanced and singularly uniform civilization of their own, closely akin but in some respects even superior to that of contemporary Mesopotamia and Egypt."

Excavations in Mohenjo-daro and Harappa have revealed this ancient and fascinating civilization to us. How much more lies buried elsewhere under the soil of India! It seems probable that this civilization was fairly widespread in India and was not merely confined to Mohenjo-daro and Harappa. Even these two places are far apart.

This was an age "in which arms and utensils of stone continue to be used side by side with those of copper and bronze." Sir John Marshall tells us of the points of difference and superiority of the Indus Valley people to their contemporaries of Egypt and Mesopotamia. "Thus", he says, "to mention only a few salient points, the use of cotton for textiles was exclusively restricted at this period to India and was not extended to the western world until two or three thousand years later. Again, there is nothing that we know of in prehistoric Egypt or Mesopotamia or anywhere else in westtern Asia to compare with the well-built baths and commodious houses of the citizens of Mohenjo-daro. In those countries, much money and thought was lavished on the building of magnificent temples for the gods and on the palaces and tombs of kings, but the rest of the people seemingly had to content themselves with insignificant dwellings of mud. In the Indus Valley, the

picture is reversed and the finest structures are those erected for the convenience of the citizens."

Again we are told that "equally peculiar to the Indus Valley and stamped with an individual character of their own are its art and its religion. Nothing that we know of in other countries at this period bears any resemblance, in point of style, to the faience models of rams, dogs, and other animals or to the intaglio engravings on the seals, the best of which—notably the humped and short-horn bulls—are distinguished by a breath of treatment and a feeling for line and plastic form that has rarely been surpassed in glyptic art; nor would it be possible, until the classic age of Greece, to match the exquisitely supple modelling of the two human statuettes from Harappa figured in Plates X and XI. In the religion of the Indus people, there is much, of course, that might be paralleled in other countries. This is true of every prehistoric and most historic religions as well. But, taken as a whole, their religion is so characteristically Indian as hardly to be distinguished from still living Hinduism . . . ."

You may not understand a few words in this quotation. *Faience* means earthenware or porcelain work; *intaglio* and *glyptic* works are carvings and engravings on something hard, often some precious stone or gem.

I wish I could see the statuettes found at Harappa, or even their pictures. Perhaps, some day, you and I may journey to Harappa and Mohenjo-daro and take our fill of these sights. Meanwhile we shall carry on—you at your school at Poona, and I at my school, which is called the District Jail of Dehra Dun.

61

CORDOBA AND GRANADA

June 16, 1932

We have journeyed on in Asia and Europe through the years, and we have halted at the end of a thousand years after Christ, and had a look back. But Spain has some how been left out of our account—Spain under the Arabs—and we must go back and fit her into the picture.

Something you know already, if you still remember it. It was in 711 A.C. that the Arab general crossed to Spain from Africa. He was Tarick and he landed at Gibralter (the *Jabal-ut-Tariq,* the rock of Tariq). Within two years the Arabs had conquered the whole of Spain, and a little later Portugal was added. They went on and on; marched into France and spread all over the south. Thoroughly frightened at this, the Franks and other tribes joined together under Charles Martel and made a great effort to stop the Arabs. They succeeded, and at the great battle of Tours near Poitiers in France, the Franks defeated the Arabs. It was a great defeat and put an end to Arab dreams of the conquest of Europe. Many times after that the Arabs and the Franks and other Christian people in France fought each other; and sometimes the Arabs won and entered France, and sometimes they were pushed back in Spain. Even Charlemagne attacked them in Spain but he was defeated. On the whole however for a long period the balance was kept up and the Arab ruled in Spain but went no further.

Spain was thus made part of the great Arab Empire which spread right across Africa to the borders of Mongolia. But not for long. You will remember that

there was civil war in Arabia and the Abbasides pushed out the Ommeyade Khalifs. The Arab governor in Spain was an Ommeyade and he refused to recognise the new Abbaside Khalif. So Spain cut itself off from the Arab Empire and the Khalif at Baghdad was too far and too full of his own troubles to do anything in the matter. But bad blood continued between Spain and Baghdad, and the two Arab States, instead of helping each other in the hour of trial, rather welcomed the difficulties of each other.

It was somewhat rash of the Spanish Arabs to break loose from their homeland. They were in a far country with an alien population, and were surrounded by enemies. They were small in numbers. In the event of danger and difficulty there was no one to help them. But in those days they were full of self-confidence and cared little for these dangers. As a matter of fact they did remarkably well in spite of the continuous pressure of the Christian nations in the north, and, single handed, they maintained their dominion over the greater part of Spain for five hundred years. Even after this they managed to hold on to a smaller kingdom in the south of Spain for another two hundred years. And so they actually outlasted the great empire of Baghdad; and the city of Baghdad itself had long been reduced to dust, when the Arabs said their last farewell to Spain.

This seven hundred years of Arab rule in parts of Spain is surprising enough. But what is more interesting is the high civilization and culture of the Spanish Arabs, or Moors as they were called. A historian, carried away by his enthusiasm a little, has said that: "The Moors organised that wonderful kingdom of Cordova, which was the marvel of the middle ages, and which, when all Europe was plunged in barbaric ignorance and strife, alone held the torch of learning and civilization bright and shining before the western world."

Kurtuba was the capital of this kingdom for just five hundred years. This is usually called Cordoba in

English, sometimes Cordova. I am afraid I have a way of spelling the same name differently at times. But I shall try to stick to Cordoba. This was a great city of a million inhabitants, a garden city ten miles in length, with 24 miles of suburbs. There are said to have been 60000 palaces and mansions, 200000 smaller houses, 80000 shops, 3800 mosques and 700 public baths. These figures may be exaggerations, but they give some idea of the city. There were many libraries, the chief of these, the Imperial Library of the Emir, containing four hundred thousand books. The University of Cordoba was famous all over Europe and even in western Asia. Free elementary schools for the poor abounded. A historian says that: "In Spain almost every body knew how to read and write, whilst in Christian Europe, save and except the clergy, even persons belonging to the highest ranks were wholly ignorant."

Such was the city of Cordoba, competing with the other great Arab city of Baghdad. Its fame spread all over Europe and a German writer of the tenth century called it "the ornament of the world". To its university came students from distant places. The influence of Arab philosophy spread to the other great universities of Europe, Paris, Oxford and the north Italian universities. Averroes or Ibn Rushd was a famous philosopher of Cordoba of the twelfth century. In his later years he fell out with the Spanish Emir and was banished. He went and settled in Paris.

As in other parts of Europe there was a kind of feudal system in Spain also. Great and powerful nobles grew up, and between them and the Emir, who was the ruler, there was frequent fighting. It was this civil war which weakened the Arab State more than the attacks from outside. At the same time the power of some small Christian States in north Spain was growing and they were pushing away at the Arabs.

About 1000 A.C., that is, just at the end of the millennium, the kingdom of the Emir extended almost all over Spain. It even included a bit of southern

France. But collapse came soon, and, as usual, it was due to internal weakness. The fine fabric of Arab civilization with its arts and luxury and chivalry was after all a rich man's civilization. The poor remained poor and did not share in the growing wealth. The social system could not carry on without an upset. The starving poor revolted and there were labour riots. Gradually civil war spread, and the provinces fell away, and the Spanish empire of the Arabs went to pieces. Still the Arabs continued, split up as they were, and it was not till 1236 A.C. that Cordoba finally fell to the Christian King of Castile.

The Arabs were driven south but still they resisted. In the south of Spain they carved a little kingdom, the kingdom of Granada, and held on there. It was a little affair, this kingdom, so far as size went, but it reproduced Arab civilization in miniature. The famous Alhambra still stands in Granada, with its beautiful arches and columns and arabesques, a reminder of those days. It was originally called in Arabic 'al-Hamra', the red palace. Arabesques are the beautiful designs you often see on Arab and other buildings influenced by Islam. The painting of figures was not encouraged by Islam. So the builders took to making fancy and intricate designs. Often they wrote Arabic verses from the Quran over the arches and elsewhere and made of them a beautiful decoration. The Arabic script is a flowing script which lends itself easily to such decoration.

The kingdom of Granada lasted for two hundred years. It was pressed and harassed by the Christian States of Spain, especially Castile, and sometimes it agreed to pay tribute to Castile. It would probably not have lasted so long if the Christian States had themselves not been divided. But in 1469 A.C. a marriage took place between the rulers of two of these principal states, Ferdinand and Isabella, and this united Castile, Aragon and Leon. Ferdinand and Isabella put an end to the Arab kingdom of Granada. The Arabs fought

bravely for several years till they were surrounded and hemmed in in Granada. Starved out, they surrendered in 1492.

Many of the Saracens or Arabs left Spain and went to Africa. Near Granada, overlooking the city, there is a spot which still bears the name of "El ultimo sospiro del moro", the last sigh of the Moor.

But a large number of Arabs remained in Spain. The treatment of these Arabs is a very dark chapter in the history of Spain. There was cruelty and massacre and the promises made to them about toleration were forgotten. About this time the Inquisition, that terrible weapon which the Roman Church forged, to crush all who did not bow down to it, was established in Spain. Jews, who had prospered under the Saracens, were now forced to change their religion and many were burnt to death. Women and children were not spared. "The infidels" (that is the Saracens), so says a historian, "were ordered to abandon their picturesque costume, and to assume the hat and breeches of their conquerors, to renounce their language, their customs and ceremonies, even their very names, and to speak Spanish, behave Spanishly, and re-name themselves Spaniards." Of course there were risings and revolts against these barbarities. But they were mercilessly crushed.

The Spanish Christians seem to have been very much against washing and bathing. Perhaps they objected to these simply because the Spanish Arabs were very fond of them and had erected great public baths all over the place. The Christians even went so far as to issue orders "for the reformation of the Moriscoes" or Moors or Arabs, that "neither themselves, their women, nor any other persons, should be permitted to wash or bathe themselves either at home or elsewhere; and that all their bathing houses should be pulled down and destroyed."

Apart from the sin of washing, another great charge brought against the "Moriscoes" was that they were tolerant in religion. It is extraordinary to read of

this and yet this was one of the main charges in an account of the "Apostacies and Treasons of the Moriscoes" drawn up by the Archbishop of Valencia in 1602, when he was recommending the expulsion of Saracens from Spain. Referring to this he says "that they (the Moriscoes) commended nothing so much as that liberty of conscience in all matters of religion, which the Turks, and all other Mohammedans, suffer their subjects to enjoy." What a great compliment was thus paid unwittingly to the Saracens in Spain, and how different and intolerant was the outlook of the Spanish Christians!

Millions of Saracens were driven out forcibly from Spain, mostly into Africa, some to France. But you must remember that the Arabs had been in Spain for seven hundred years; and during this long period they had become to a large extent merged in the people of Spain. Originally Arabs, they had gradually become more and more Spaniards. Probably the Spanish Arabs of later years were quite different from the Arabs of Baghdad. Even to-day the Spanish race has much of Arab blood in its veins.

Saracens also had spread to the south of France and even to Switzerland, not as rulers, but as settlers. Sometimes even now one comes across an Arab type of face among the Frenchmen from the *midi*.

So ended, not only Saracen rule in Spain, but also Arab civilization. For, even earlier, this civilization had collapsed in Asia, as we shall presently see. It influenced many countries and many cultures, and left many a bright souvenir. But it did not rise again by itself in after history.

After the Saracens left, Spain, under Ferdinand and Isabella, grew in power. Soon after, the discovery of America brought vast wealth to it, and for a while it was the most powerful country in Europe, dominating others. But its fall was rapid and it sunk into insignificance, while the other countries of Europe advanced, Spain remained stagnant, dreaming still of the middle

ages and not realising that the world had changed since then.

An English historian, Lane Poole, writing of the Saracens in Spain says: "For centuries Spain had been the centre of civilization, the seat of arts and sciences, of learning and every form of refined enlightenment. No other country in Europe had so far approached the cultivated dominion of the Moors. The brief brilliancy of Ferdinand and Isabella, and of the Empire of Charles could found no such enduring pre-eminence. The Moors were banished; for a while Christian Spain shone, like the moon, with a borrowed light; then came the eclipse, and in that darkness Spain has grovelled ever since. The true memorial of the Moors is seen in desolate tracts of utter barrenness, where once the Moors grew luxuriant vines and olives and yellow ears of corn; in a stupid ignorant population where once wit and learning flourished; in the general stagnation and degradation of a people which has hopelessly fallen in the scale of nations, and has deserved its humiliation."

This is a hard judgment. About a year ago there was a revolution in Spain and the king was removed. There is a republic there now. Perhaps this young republic will do better, and bring up Spain again in line with other countries.

62

THE CRUSADES

June 19, 1932

I told you in a recent letter (No. 57) of the declaration by the Pope and his Church Council of a holy war against the Moslems for the recovery of the city of Jerusalem. The rising power of the Seljuq Turks frightened Europe, and especially the Constantinople government, which was directly threatened. Stories of Turkish ill treatment of Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem and Palestine excited the people of Europe and filled them with anger. So a 'holy war' was declared, and the Pope and the Church called upon all the Christian people of Europe to march to the rescue of the 'holy' city.

Thus began the Crusades in 1095 A.C. and for more than a hundred and fifty years the struggle continued between Christianity and Islam, between the Cross and the Crescent. There were long periods of rest in between, but there was almost a continuous state of war, and wave after wave of Christian crusaders came to fight and mostly to die in the 'holy' land. This long warfare yielded no substantial results to the crusaders. For a short while Jerusalem was in the hands of the crusaders, but later it went back to the Turks, and there it remained. The chief result of the Crusade was to bring death and misery to millions of Christians and Moslems and again to soak Asia Minor and Palestine with human blood.

What was the state of the Empire of Baghdad at this time? The Abbasides continued at the head of it. They were still the Khalifs, the Commanders of the Faithful. But they were nominal heads, having little

power. We have already seen their empire split up and the provincial governors becoming independent. Mahmud of Ghazni, who raided India so often, was a powerful sovereign who threatened the Khalif, if the latter did not behave according to his wishes. Even in Baghdad itself the Turks were really masters. Then came another branch of the Turks—the Seljuqs—and they rapidly established their power, and spread, conquering to Constantinople itself. But the Khalif still remained the Khalif, but with no political power. He gave the title of Sultan to the Seljuq chiefs, and the Sultan ruled. The Crusaders had thus to fight against these Seljuq Sultans and their followers.

In Europe the Crusades increased the idea of "Christendom"—the world of Christianity, as opposed to all non-Christians. Europe had a common idea and purpose—the recovery of the 'holy land' from the so-called infidel. This common purpose filled people with enthusiasm, and many a man left home and property for the sake of the great cause. Many went with noble motives. Many were attracted by the promise of the Pope that those who went would have their sins forgiven. There were other reasons also for the Crusades. Rome wanted once for all to become the boss of Constantinople. You will remember that the Constantinople Church was different from that of Rome. It called itself the Orthodox Church and it disliked the Roman Church intensely and considered the Pope as an upstart. The Pope wanted to put an end to this conceit of Constantinople and to bring it within his fold. Under the cloak of a holy war against the infidel Turk, he wanted to obtain what he had long desired. That is the way of politicians and those who consider themselves statesmen! It is well to remember this conflict between Rome and Constantinople as it continually crops up during the Crusades.

Another reason for the Crusades was a commercial one. The business people, especially of the growing ports of Venice and Genoa, wanted them as their trade

was suffering. The Seljuq Turks had closed many of their trade routes to the East.

The common people of course knew nothing about these reasons. No one told them. Politicians usually hide their real reasons and talk pompously of religion and justice and truth and the like. It was so at the time of the Crusades. It is so still. People were taken in then; and still the great majority of people are taken in by the soft talk of politicians.

So large numbers gathered for the Crusades. Among these were good and earnest people; but there were also many who were far from good. The hope of plunder attracted these latter. It was a strange collection of pious and religious men and the riffraff of the population, who were capable of every kind of crime. Indeed these crusaders, or many of them, going out to serve in, what was to them, a noble cause, did commit the vilest and most disgusting of crimes. Many were so busy with plundering and misbehaving on the way that they never reached anywhere near Palestine. Some took to massacring Jews on the way; some even massacred their brother Christians. Fed up with their misbehaviour, sometimes the peasantry of the Christian countries they passed through rose and killed them and drove them away.

The Crusaders at last managed to reach Palestine under a Norman, Godfrey of Bouillon. Jerusalem fell to them and then the "carnage lasted for a week." There was a terrible massacre. A French eye-witness of this says that "under the portico of the mosque the blood was knee deep and reached the horses bridles." Godfrey became king of Jerusalem.

Seventy years later Jerusalem was retaken from the Christians by Saladin, the Sultan of Egypt. This excited the people of Europe again and several Crusades followed. This time the kings and emperors of Europe came in person, but they had little success. They quarrelled among themselves for precedence and were jealous of each other. It is a dismal story of ghastly and cruel

war and petty intrigue and sordid crime. But sometimes the better side of human nature prevailed over this horror and incidents took place when enemies behaved with courtesy and chivalry to each other. Among the foreign kings in Palestine was Richard of England, Coeur de Lion, the Lion-Hearted, noted for his physical strength and courage. Saladin was also a great fighter and famous for his chivalry. Even the Crusaders who fought Saladin came to appreciate this chivalry of his. There is a story that once Richard was very ill and was suffering from the heat. Saladin, hearing of this, arranged to send him fresh snow and ice from the mountains. Ice could not be made artificially then by freezing water, as we do now. So natural snow and ice from the mountains had to be taken by swift messengers.

There are many stories of the time of the Crusades. Perhaps you have read Walter Scott's *Talisman*.

One batch of Crusaders went to Constantinople and took possession of it. They drove out the Greek Emperor of the Eastern Empire and established a Latin kingdom and the Roman Church. Terrible massacres also took place in Constantinople by these Crusaders and the city itself was partly burnt by them. But this Latin kingdom did not last long. The Greeks of the Eastern Empire, wobbly as they were, came back and drove away the Latins after a little over fifty years. The Eastern Empire of Constantinople continued for another two hundred years, till 1453, when the Turks finally put an end to it.

This capture of Constantinpole by the Crusaders brings out the desire of the Roman Church and the Pope to extend their influence there. Although the Greeks of this city had in a moment of panic appealed to Rome for help against the Turk, they helped the Crusaders little, and disliked them greatly.

But the most terrible of all these Crusades was what is called the Children's Crusade. Large numbers of young boys, chiefly French and some from Germany,

in their excitement left their homes and decided to go to Palestine. Many of them died on the way, many were lost. Most of them reached Marseilles and there these poor children were tricked and their enthusiasm was taken advantage of by scoundrels. Under the pretext of taking them to the "holy land", slave-traders took them on their ships, carried them to Egypt, and sold them into slavery.

Richard of England on his way back from Palestine was captured by his enemies in east Europe and a very heavy ransom had to be paid for his release. A king of France was captured in Palestine itself, and had to be ransomed. An emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Frederick Barbarossa, was drowned in a river in Palestine. Meanwhile, as time went on, all the glamour went out of these Crusades. People got fed up with them. Jerusalem remained in Moslem hands, but the kings and people of Europe were no longer interested in wasting more lives and treasure for its recovery. Since then for nearly seven hundred years Jerusalem continued under the Moslems. It was only recently, during the Great War, in 1918, that it was taken from the Turks by an English general.

One of the later Crusades was interesting and unusual. Indeed it was hardly a crusade at all in the old sense of the word. The Emperor Frederick II, of the Holy Empire, came and, instead of fighting, had an interview with the then Sultan of Egypt and they came to a friendly understanding! Frederick was an extraordinary person. At a time when most kings were hardly literate, he knew many languages, including Arabic. He was known as the "Wonder of the World." He cared little for the Pope and the Pope thereupon excommunicated him, but this had little effect on him.

The Crusades thus failed to achieve anything. But this continuous fighting weakened the Seljuq Turks. Even more than this, however, feudalism sapped the foundations of the Seljuq Empire. The big feudal lords

considered themselves practically independent. They fought each other. Sometimes they even went so far as to ask for Christian help against each other. It was this internal weakness of the Turks that played into the hands of the crusaders sometimes. When, however, there was a strong ruler like Saladin, they made little progress.

There is another view of the Crusades, a recent view put forward by the English historian G. M. Trevelyan (the author of the Garibaldi books which you know). This is interesting. "The Crusades", says Trevelyan, "were the military and religious aspect of a general urge towards the East on the part of the reviving energies of Europe. The prize that Europe brought back from the Crusades was not the permanent liberation of the Holy Sepulchre or the potential unity of Christendom, of which the story of the Crusades was one long negation. She brought back instead the finer arts and crafts, luxury, science, and intellectual curiosity—everything that Peter the Hermit would most have despised."

Saladin died in 1193, and gradually what remained of the old Arab empire went to pieces. In many parts of western Asia there was disorder under the petty feudal lords. The last Crusade took place in 1249. It was headed by Louis IX, King of France. He was defeated and taken prisoner.

Meanwhile big things had been happening in eastern and Central Asia. The Mongols, under a mighty chieftain, Chengiz or Jenghiz Khan, were advancing and covering the eastern horizon like a huge dark cloud. Crusader and defender, Christian and Moslem alike, saw this coming invasion with fear. We shall deal with Chengiz and the Mongols in a later letter.

One thing I should like to mention before I end this letter. In Bokhara, in Central Asia, there lived a very great Arab physician, who was famous in Asia as well as Europe. His name was Ibn Sina, but he is better known in Europe as Avicenna. The Prince of Physicians he was called. He died in 1037, before the Crusades began.

I mention Ibn Sina's name because of his fame. But remember that right through this period, even when the Arab empire was on the decline, Arab civilization continued in western and part of Central Asia. Saladin, busy as he was fighting the Crusaders, built many colleges and hospitals. But this civilization was on the eve of a sudden and complete collapse. The Mongols were coming from the East.

63

EUROPE AT THE TIME OF THE CRUSADES

June 20, 1932

In my last letter we saw something of the clash between Christianity and Islam in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The idea of Christendom develops in Europe. Christianity has by this time spread all over Europe, the last comers being the Slav races of Eastern Europe—Russians and others. There is an interesting story—I do not know how far it is true—that the old Russian people, before they became Christian, discussed the question of changing their old religion and adopting a new one. The two new religions they had heard of were Christianity and Islam. So, quite in the modern style, they sent a deputation to visit the countries where these religions were practised, to examine them and report on them. It is said that this deputation visited some places in western Asia, where Islam prevailed, and then they went to Constantinople. They were amazed at what they saw at Constantinople. The ceremonial of the Orthodox Church was rich and gorgeous, with music and beautiful singing. The priests came in splendid garments and there was burning of incense. This ceremonial impressed the simple and semi-civilized people from the north tremendously. Islam had nothing so gorgeous. So they decided in favour of Christianity and on their return, they reported accordingly to their king. The king and his people thereupon became Christians, and because they took their Christianity from Constantinople, they were followers of the Orthodox Greek Church and not of Rome. At no subsequent time did Russia acknowledge the Pope of Rome.

This conversion of Russia took place long before the Crusades. The Bulgarians also, it is said, at one time were half inclined to become Mohammedans but then the attraction of Constantinople was greater. Their king married a Byzantine princess (you will remember that Byzantium was the old name for Constantinople) and became a Christian. In the same way other neighbouring people had adopted Christianity.

What was happening in Europe during these Crusades? You have seen that some of the kings and emperors journeyed to Palestine and several of them got into trouble there. There Pope meanwhile sat in Rome and issued commands and appeals for the "holy war" against the "infidel" Turk. This was the time perhaps when the power of the Popes was at its highest. I have told you how a proud emperor stood barefoot in the snow at Canossa waiting to be admitted to the Pope's presence to beg forgiveness. It was this Pope Gregory VII, whose previous name was Hildebrand, who had fixed up a new method for the election of Popes. The cardinals were the highest priests in the Roman Catholic world. A college of cardinals was created, the Holy College it was called, and this college elected a new Pope. This was the system introduced in 1059 A.C. and has continued, perhaps with some modifications, to this day. Even now when a Pope dies, the College of Cardinals meets immediately and they sit in a locked chamber. No one can come in or go out from that room till the election is over. Often they have sat there for many long hours unable to agree about their choice. But they cannot come out! So they are forced to agree at last, and as soon as a choice is made a light is shown at a window so that the waiting crowds outside can know.

Just as the Pope was chosen by election, the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire also came to be elected. But he was elected by the great feudal lords. There were seven of these, the elector-princes as they were called. In this way they tried to prevent the

Emperor always coming from one family. In practice, however, one family often dominated these elections for long periods.

Thus we find in the twelfth and thirteenth century the Hohenstaufen dynasty dominating the Empire. Hohenstaufen is, I believe, some small town or village in Germany. The family originally coming from there took their name from it. Frederick I of Hohenstaufen became Emperor in 1152. He is usually called Frederick Barbarossa. He it was who got drowned on his way to the Crusades. It is said that his reign was the most brilliant in the history of the Empire. To the German people he has long been a hero, a half mythical figure round whom many legends have gathered. It is said that he sleeps in a deep cavern in a mountain and when the right time comes he will wake up and come out to save his people.

Against the Pope, Frederick Barbarossa carried on a great struggle, but this ended in the victory of the Pope, and Frederick had to bow down to him. He was an autocratic monarch, but his great feudal vassals gave him a lot of trouble. In Italy, where great cities were growing up, Frederick tried to crush their freedom. But he did not succeed. In Germany also great cities were growing, especially on the banks of rivers: Cologne, Hamburg, Frankfurt, and many others. Here Frederick's policy was different. He supported the free German cities. He did so in order to lessen the power of the nobles and feudal lords.

I have told you on several occasions what the old Indian idea of kingship was. From the old Aryan days to Ashoka's time, and from the *Arthashastra* to the *Nītisāra* of Sukracharya, it is repeatedly stated that the king must bow down to public opinion. It is the public that is the ultimate master. This was the Indian theory, although in practice kings in India, like elsewhere, were autocratic enough. Compare this to the old European view. According to the lawyers of those days the emperor had absolute authority. His will was law.

"The Emperor is the living law upon Earth", they said. Frederick Barbarossa himself said that "It is not for the people to give laws to the prince, but to obey his command."

Compare also the Chinese view. The emperor or king there was called by high sounding titles, like the Son of Heaven, but this must not mislead us. In theory his position was very different from that of the all-powerful European emperor. An old Chinese writer, Meng-tse has written that: "The people is the most important element in the country; next come the useful gods of the soil and the crops, and least in importance comes the ruler."

The emperor in Europe was thus supposed to be supreme on earth, and it was from this that the notion of the divine right of kings flowed. In practice, of course, he was very far from supreme. Even his feudal vassals were turbulent enough, and gradually we shall see new classes rising in the cities, which claimed some share of power. On the other hand the Pope also claimed to be supreme on earth. Where two "supremes" meet there was bound to be trouble!

The grandson of Frederick Barbarossa was also called Frederick. He became emperor at an early age and was called Frederick II. He was the man who was called *stupor mundi*, the Wonder of the World, and who went to Palestine and had a friendly talk with the Egyptian Sultan. He also, like his grandfather, played about with the Pope and refused to obey him. The Pope retaliated by excommunicating him. This was the old and mighty weapon of the Popes, but it was growing a little rusty. Frederick II cared little for the anger of the Pope and the world also was changing. Frederick wrote long letters to all the princes and rulers of Europe, pointing out that the Pope had no business to interfere with the kings; it was the business of the Popes to look after religious and spiritual matters and not to meddle with politics. He also described the corruption of the clergy. Frederick had by far the best of the argument

with the Popes. His letters are very interesting as they are the first indication of the modern spirit being brought in the old strength between Emperor and Pope.

Frederick II was very tolerant in religion, and Arab and Jewish philosophers came to his court. It is said that it was through him that the Arabic numerals and algebra (which you will remember came originally from India) came to Europe. He also founded the university of Naples and a great medical school at the ancient university of Salerno.

Frederick II ruled from 1212 to 1250. With his death ended the Hohenstaufen control of the empire. Indeed the empire itself practically ended. Italy fell away. Germany went to pieces and for many years there was frightful disorder. Robber knights and bandits plundered and looted and there was no one to check them. The weight of the Holy Roman Empire had been too great for the German kingdom to bear. In France and England, the kings were gradually consolidating their positions, and putting down the big feudal vassals who were troublesome. In Germany the king was also emperor, and he was far too busy fighting the Pope or the Italian cities to curb his nobles. Germany had the doubtful honour of having the Emperor, but it paid for this by weakness and dissension at home. France and England grew to be strong nations long before Germany was even united. For hundreds of years there were numerous petty princes in Germany. It was only about sixty years ago that Germany was united and even then the little kings and princes continued. The Great War of 1914-18 put an end to this crowd.

There was so much disorder in Germany after Frederick II that for twenty three years no emperor was elected. In 1273 Rudolph, Count of Hapsburgh, was elected emperor. A new family—that of Hapsburgh—now comes upon the scene. This was going to stick to the empire to the end. This family also came to end, as a ruling one, during the Great War. The Emperor of Austria-Hungary at the time of the war was a Haps-

burgh named Francis Joseph. He was a very old man, having been on the throne for over 60 years. His nephew and heir to the throne was Franz Ferdinand, who was murdered with his wife in Serajevo in Bosnia (in the Balkans) in 1914. It was this murder which brought on the Great War. And the War put an end to many things, among them the old dynasty of the Hapsburgs.

So much for the Holy Roman Empire. To the west of it, France and England were frequently at war with each other, and, more frequently, the king of each was at war with his big nobles. The kings triumphed over their nobles, much more than the Emperor or King in Germany, and so England and France grew to be much more compact countries, and their unity gave them strength.

In England an event happened about this time of which you might have read. This was the signing of the Magna Charta by King John in 1215 A.C. John had succeeded his brother, Richard *Coeur de Lion.* He was very grasping but he was also weak. He succeeded in irritating everybody. The nobles cornered him at the island of Runnymeade in the Thames and, almost at the sword's point, forced him to sign this Magna Charta, or Great Charter, which contained a promise that he would respect certain liberties of the nobles and people of England. This was the first big step in the long fight for political liberty in England. It was especially laid down that the king could not interfere with the property and liberty of any citizen without the consent of the man's equals. Out of this arose the jury system where equals are supposed to judge. Thus in England we find that the king's power was checked early. The theory of the supremacy of the ruler, which prevailed in the Holy Roman Empire, was not accepted in England even then.

It is interesting to think that this rule laid down in England over seven hundred years ago, does not apply to India even in 1932 under British rule. To-day one individual, the Viceroy, has power to issue Ordinances,

framing laws and depriving people of their liberty and their property.

Soon after Magna Charta another notable event took place in England. A national council gradually grew up to which knights and citizens were sent from the different country areas and the cities. This was the beginning of the English Parliament. The knights and citizens came to form the Commons' House; the nobles and the bishops formed the Lords' House. This Parliament had little power to begin with. This power grew gradually. Ultimately there came the final test between the King and Parliament, as to who was supreme. The King lost his head, and Parliament became undisputed master. But this was to take place after nearly four hundred years, in the seventeenth century.

In France also there was a council of the Three Estates, as they were called. These three estates were the lords, the church and the commons. This council sometimes met, when the King willed it. But its meetings were very infrequent and it did not succeed in gaining the power which the English Parliament did. In France also a king had to loose his head before the power of the kings was broken.

In the east, the Eastern Roman Empire of the Greeks was continuing. From its earliest days it had been at war with some one or other, and often it seemed at the point of succumbing. Yet it survived, first from the northern barbarians and now from the Moslems. Of all the attacks that fell on the empire, from the Russians or Bulgarians or Arabs or the Seljuq Turks, the most deadly and harmful was the attack of the Crusaders. These Christian knights did more injury to Christian Constantinople than any "infidel" had done. From this great catastrophe the empire and the city of Constantinople never recovered.

The world of western Europe was quite ignorant of the Eastern Empire. It cared little for it. It was hardly part of "Christendom". Its language was Greek, while the learned language of western Europe was Latin.

As a matter of fact even in these days of its decline there was far more learning and literary activity in Constantinople than in the West. But it was the learning of the aged, without any strength behind it, or creative power. The West had little learning, but it was young and had creative power, and soon this power was to break out in the creation of works of beauty.

In the Eastern Empire there was no conflict between the Church and the Emperor as in Rome. The Emperor here was supreme and he was quite despotic. There was no question of any freedom. The throne was the prize of the strongest or the most unscrupulous. By murder and trickery, through blood and crime, men gained the crown, and the people sheepishly obeyed them. It seemed to be immaterial to them who ruled.

The Eastern Empire stood as a kind of sentinel at the gates of Europe, guarding them from Asiatic invasion. For many hundreds of years it succeeded. The Arabs could not take Constantinople; the Seljuq Turks, although they came near it, could not take it; the Mongols past it by and went north into Russia. Last came the Ottoman Turks and to them fell the great prize of the imperial city of Constantinople in 1453 A.C. And with the fall of the city, fell also the Eastern Empire.

64

THE RISE OF EUROPEAN CITIES

June 21, 1932

The period of the Crusades was the great period of faith in Europe, of common aspiration and belief, and the people sought relief from their daily misery in this faith and hope. There was no science; there was very little learning; for faith and science and learning do not easily go together. Learning and knowledge made people think, and doubt and questioning are difficult companions for faith to have. And the way of science is the way of enquiry and experiment, which is not the way of faith. We shall see later how this faith weakened and doubt arose.

But for the moment we see faith flourishing and the Roman Church putting itself at the head of the 'faithful' and often exploiting them. Many, many thousands of the 'faithful' were sent to the Crusades in Palestine, never to return. The Pope also began to declare crusades against Christian people or groups in Europe who did not obey him in everything. The Pope and the Church also took advantage of this faith by issuing, and often selling, "dispensations" and "indulgences." "Dispensations" were permissions to break some law or convention of the Church. Thus the very laws which the Church made, it allowed to be set aside in special cases. Respect for such laws could hardly continue for long. "Indulgences" were even worse. According to the Roman Church, after death a soul goes to purgatory, which is a place somewhere between heaven and hell, and there it suffers for the sins committed in this world. Afterwards the soul is supposed to go to heaven. The Pope issued promises to people, for pay-

ment, that they would escape purgatory and go straight to heaven! Thus the faith of the simple was exploited by the Church, and even out of crimes and what it considered sins, it made money. This practice of selling "indulgences" grew up some time after the Crusades. It became a great scandal and was one of the reasons why many people turned against the Church of Rome.

It is strange with how much people with simple faith will put up. It is because of this that religion has become one of the biggest and most paying businesses in many countries. See the priests in the temples, how they try to fleece the poor worshipper. Go to the banks of the Ganges, and you will see the *pandās* refusing to perform some ceremony till the unhappy villager pays up. Whatever happens in the family—a birth, a marriage, a death—the priest steps in and payment is required.

In every religion this is so—Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism. Each has its own methods of making money out of the faith of the faithful. In Hinduism the methods are obvious enough. In Islam there is supposed to be no priesthood, and in the past this helped a little in protecting its followers from religious exploitation. But individuals and classes arose, calling themselves specialists in religion, learned men, maulavis and mullās and the like, and they imposed upon the simple Muslims of faith and exploited them. Where a long beard, or a tuft of hair on the crown of the head, or a long mark on the forehead, or a fakir's dress, or a sanyasin's yellow or ochre garb is a passport to holiness, it is not difficult to impose on the public.

It is amazing to what lengths men will go, even though they may be completely lacking in intelligence. Perhaps you have heard of the Aga Khan. He is the head of a sect of Moslems and has many rich followers. It is said that he still practises a system like the old Papal one of issuing indulgences for payment. But he goes further, it appears. He actually gives a letter addressed to the Archangel Gabriel, or some other equally high

authority in the other world, requesting him to treat the bearer of the letter with especial consideration. For this letter heavy payment is no doubt made and I believe it is put in the coffin of the man when he dies. Strange is the hold of faith and religion when it can survive even this! And yet the Aga Khan himself is a cultured person who lives chiefly in Paris and London and is very fond of horse racing.

If you go to America, most advanced of countries, you will find there also that religion is a big industry living on the exploitation of the people.

I have wandered far from the middle ages and the age of faith. We must go back to them. We find this faith taking visible and creative shape. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries there is a great building period and cathedrals spring up all over western Europe. A new architecture appears such as had not been seen in Europe before. By a clever device the weight and stress of the heavy roofs is distributed to great buttresses outside the building. Inside one is surprised to see delicate columns apparently supporting the massive weight on top. There is a pointed arch, taken from the Arab style of architecture. Above the whole building there is a spire climbing up to the sky. This was the Gothic style of architecture which was evolved in Europe. It was wondrously beautiful and it seemed to represent soaring faith and aspiration. Truly it represents that age of faith. Such buildings can only be built by architects and craftsmen in love with their work and co-operating together in a great undertaking.

This rise of the Gothic in western Europe is a surprising thing. Out of the welter of disorder and anarchy and ignorance and intolerance, grew up this thing of beauty, almost like a prayer going up to the heavens. In France, North Italy, Germany and England, Gothic cathedrals grew up almost simultaneously. No one knows how exactly they began. No one knows the names of their architects. They seem to represent more the joint will and labour of the people as a

whole than that of a single architect. Another new thing was the stained glass of the windows of the cathedrals. There were fine paintings in beautiful colours on these windows, and the light that came through them added to the solemn and awe-inspiring effect created by the building.

Some little time ago, in one of my recent letters to you, I compared Europe with Asia. We saw that Asia was far more cultured and civilized than Europe at the time. And yet in India there was not much of creative work being done and creation, I said, was the sign of life. This Gothic architecture coming out of semi-civilised Europe shows us that there was life enough there. In spite of the difficulties which disorder and a backward state of civilization present, this life breaks out and seeks methods of manifesting itself. The Gothic buildings were one of these manifestations. Later we shall see it coming out in painting and sculpture and the love of adventure.

You have seen some of these Gothic cathedrals. I wonder if you remember them. You visited the beautiful cathedral at Cologne in Germany. At Milan in Italy there is a very fine Gothic cathedral; so also at Chartres in France. But I cannot name all these places. These cathedrals are spread out over Germany, France, England and north Italy. It is strange that in Rome itself there is no Gothic building of note.

During this great building period of the eleventh and twelfth centuries non-Gothic churches were also put up, like the great cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, and probably St. Mark's in Venice. St. Mark's, which you have seen, is an example of Byzantine work and has beautiful mosaic work.

The age of faith declined and with it the building of churches and cathedrals. Men's thoughts turned to other directions, to their businesses and trade, to their civic life. Instead of cathedrals, city walls began to be built. So we find from the beginning of the fifteenth century beautiful Gothic town halls or guild halls scat-

tered over northern and western Europe. In London the Houses of Parliament are Gothic, but I do not know when they were built. I have an idea that the original Gothic building was burnt down and another one, also Gothic in style, was then built.

These great Gothic cathedrals that rose up in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were situated in the towns and cities. The old cities were making up, and new towns were growing. There was a change all over Europe and everywhere town life was increasing. In the old days of the Roman Empire there were of course great towns all round the Mediterranean coast. But with the fall of Rome and Græco-Roman civilization, these towns also decayed. Except for Constantinople there was hardly a big city in Europe, apart from Spain where the Arabs were. In Asia—in India, China and the Arabian world—great cities flourished at this time. But Europe did not have them. Cities and culture and civilization seem to go together, and Europe had none of these for long after the collapse of the Roman order.

But now again there was a revival of city life. In Italy especially these cities grew. They were a thorn in the side of the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire for they would not agree to the suppression of certain liberties they had. These cities in Italy and elsewhere represent the growth of the merchant classes and the bourgeoisie or middle classes.

Venice, lording it over the Adriatic Sea, had become a free republic. Beautiful as it is to-day, as the sea goes in and out through its winding canals, it is said that it was marshy land before the city was built. When Attila the Hun came down with fire and sword into Aquileia, some fugitives managed to escape to the marshes of Venice. They built themselves the city of Venice there and, situated as they were between the Eastern Roman Empire and the Western, they managed to remain free. Trade came to Venice from India and the East and brought it riches, and she built up a navy and became a power on the sea. It was a republic of rich men with a

president who was called a Doge. This republic lasted till Napolean entered Venice as a conqueror in 1797. It is said that the Doge, who was a very old man, dropped down dead on that day. He was the last Doge of Venice.

On the other side of Italy was Genoa, also a great trading city of sea-faring folk, a rival of Venice. In between was the university town of Bologna, and Pisa, and Verona, and Florence, which was to produce soon so many great artists and which was going to shine brilliantly under the rule of the famous Medici family. Milan also in north Italy, was already an important manufacturing centre; and, in the south, Naples was growing.

In France, Paris, which Hugh Capet had made his capital, was growing with the growth of France. Always Paris has been the nerve-centre and heart of France. There have been other capitals of other countries, but none of them, during the last thousand years, has dominated the country so much as Paris has dominated France. Other towns in France which become important are Lyons and Marseilles (which was a very old port), Orleans, Bordeaux and Boulogne.

In Germany, as in Italy, the growth of the free cities is most notable, especially in the 13th and 14th centuries. Their population grows, and as their power and wealth increase, they grow bolder, and fight the nobles. The Emperor sometimes encouraged them as he wanted to subdue the big nobles. These cities formed big commercial leagues and associations for defending themselves. Sometimes these associations or confederacies, as they are called, actually made war on counter associations of nobles. Hamburg, Bremen, Cologna, Frankfurt, Munich, Dantzig, Nuremburg and Breslau were some of these growing cities.

In the Netherlands (known as Holland and Belgium now) there were the cities of Antwerp, Bruges and Ghent, commercial cities with an ever growing business. In England, of course, there was London, but it could

not then compete with the important cities of the continent in size or wealth or trade. The two universities of Oxford and Cambridge were growing in importance as centres of learning. In the east of Europe there was the city of Vienna, one of the oldest in Europe; and in Russia there was Moscow and Kieff and Novgorod.

These new cities, or most of them, must be distinguished from the old style imperial cities. The importance of the rising cities of Europe was not due to any emperor or king, but to the trade that they controlled. Their strength lay therefore, not in the nobles, but in the merchant classes. They were merchant cities. The rise of the cities therefore means the rise of the bourgeoisie. This bourgeoisie, we shall see later, went on increasing in power, till it successfully challenged king and noble and seized power from them. But this was to happen long after the period we are considering.

Cities and civilization often go together, I have just said. With the growth of cities also learning grows and the spirit of freedom. Men living in rural areas are spread out and are often very superstitious. They seem to be at the mercy of the elements. They have to work hard and have little leisure, and they dare not disobey their lords. In cities large numbers live together; they have the opportunity of living a more civilized life; of learning; of discussing and criticizing; and of thinking.

So the spirit of freedom grows both against political authority as represented by the feudal nobles, and against the spiritual authority as represented by the Church. The age of faith declines and doubt begins. The authority of the Pope and of the Church is not always blindly obeyed. We saw how the Emperor Frederick II treated the Pope. We shall see this spirit of defiance growing.

There was also a revival of learning from the twelfth century onwards. Latin was the common language of the learned in Europe, and men in quest of knowledge travelled from one university to another. Dante Alighieri, the great Italian poet, was born in 1265. Petrarch, another great poet of Italy, was born in 1304.

A little later, Chaucer, the earliest of the great English poets, flourished in England.

But even more interesting than the revival of learning were the faint beginnings of the scientific spirit, which was to grow so much in after years in Europe. You will remember my telling you that the Arabs had this spirit and worked according to it to some extent. It was difficult for such a spirit of enquiry with an open mind and of experiment to exist in Europe during the middle ages. The Church would not tolerate it. But in spite of the Church it begins to be visible. One of the first persons who had this scientific spirit at this time in Europe was an Englishman, Roger Bacon. He lived at Oxford in the thirteenth century.

65

THE AFGHANS INVADE INDIA

June 23, 1932

My letter to you was interrupted yesterday. As I sat down to write, I forgot the jail and my surroundings here and travelled, with the speed of thought, back to the world of the middle ages. But I was brought back, with even greater speed, to the present, and was made rather painfully conscious of the jail. I was told that orders had come from above forbidding interviews with Mummie and Diddaji* for a month. Why? I was not told. Why should a prisoner be told? They have been here in Dehra Dun for ten days now waiting for the next interview day and now their waiting has been to no purpose and they must go back. Such is the courtesy extended to us. Well, well, we must not mind. It is all in the day's work, and prison is prison, and we had better not forget it.

It was not possible for me to leave the present for the past after this rude awakening. But I feel a little better to-day, after a night's rest. So I begin afresh.

We shall come back to India now. We have been away long enough. What was happening here while Europe was trying to struggle out of the darkness of the middle ages; when the people there were crushed under the weight of the feudal system and the general disorder and misgovernment that prevailed; when Pope and Emperor struggled against each other, and the countries of Europe took shape; when Christianity and Islam struggled for mastery during the Crusades?

*Indira's grandmother.

Already we have had a glimpse of India during the early middle ages. We have also seen Sultan Mahmud swoop down from Ghazni in the north-west to the rich plains of northern India and plunder and destroy. Mahmud's raids, terrible as they were, produced no great or lasting change in India. They gave a great shock to the country, especially the north, and numerous fine monuments and buildings were destroyed by him. But only Sind and a part of the Punjab remained in the empire of Ghazni. The rest of the north recovered soon enough; the south was not even touched, nor was Bengal. For another hundred and fifty years or more after Mahmud, Muslim conquest or Islam made little progress in India.

It was towards the end of the twelfth century (about 1186 A.C.) that a fresh wave of invasion came from the north-west. An Afghan chief had arisen in Afghanistan, who captured Ghazni and put an end to the Ghaznavite Empire. He is called Shihab-ud-din Ghuri (Ghur being some little town in Afghanistan). He came down to Lahore, took possession of it, and then marched to Delhi. The king of Delhi was Prithwi Raj Chauhan, and under his leadership many other chiefs of northern India fought against the invader and defeated him utterly. But only for a while. Shihab-ud-din returned next year with a great force and this time he defeated and killed Prithwi Raj.

Prithwi Raj is still a popular hero and there are many legends and songs about him. The most famous of these is about his eloping with the daughter of Raja Jaichandra of Kanauj. But the elopement cost him dear. It cost him the lives of his bravest followers and the enmity of a powerful king. It sowed the seeds of dissension and mutual conflict and thus made it easy for the invader to win.

Thus in 1192 A.C. was won the first great victory by Shihab-ud-din which resulted in the establishment of Muslim rule in India. Slowly the invaders spread, east and south. In another hundred and fifty years (by

1340) Muslim rule extended over a great part of the south. Then it began to shrink in the south. New states arose, some Muslim, some Hindu, notably the Hindu Empire of Vijayanagar. For two hundred years Islam lost ground to some extent, and it was only when the great Akbar came, in the middle of the sixteenth century, that it spread again to nearly the whole of India.

The coming of the Muslim invaders into India produced many re-actions. Remember that these invaders were Afghans, and not Arabs or Persians or the cultured and highly civilized Muslims of western Asia. From the point of view of civilization these Afghans were backward as compared to Indians; but they were full of energy and far more alive than India was at the time. India was too much in a rut. It was becoming unchanging and unprogressive. It stuck to the old ways and made no attempt to better them. Even in regard to methods of warfare India was backward and the Afghans were far better organised. So, in spite of courage and sacrifice, the old India went down before the Muslim invader.

These Muslims were fierce and cruel enough to begin with. They came from a hard country where "softness" was not much appreciated. Added to this was the fact that they were in a new conquered country, surrounded by enemies, who might revolt at any moment. Fear of rebellion must have been ever present, and fear often produces cruelty and frightfulness. So there were massacres to cow down the people. It was not a question of a Muslim killing a Hindu because of his religion; but a question of an alien conqueror trying to break the spirit of the conquered. Religion is almost always brought in to explain these acts of cruelty, but this is not correct. Sometimes religion was used as a pretext. But the real causes were political or social. The people from Central Asia, who invaded India, were fierce and merciless even in their homelands and long before they were converted to Islam. Having

conquered a new country they only knew one way of keeping it under control—the way of terror.

Gradually, however, we find India toning down these fierce warriors and civilizing them. They begin to feel as if they were Indians and not foreign invaders. They marry women of the country, and the distinction between invader and the invaded slowly lessens.

It will interest you to know that Mahmud of Ghazni, who was the greatest destroyer that north India had known, and is said to have been a champion of Islam against the "idolators," had a Hindu army corps under a Hindu General, named Tilak. He took Tilak and his army to Ghazni and used him to put down rebellious Muslims. So you will see that for Mahmud the object was conquest. In India he was prepared to kill "idolators" with the help of his Muslim soldiers; in Central Asia he was equally prepared to kill Muslims with the help of his Hindu soldiers.

Islam shook up India. It introduced vitality and an impulse for progress in a society which was becoming wholly unprogressive. Hindu art which had become decadent and morbid, and heavy with repetition and detail, undergoes a change in the north. A new art grows up, which might be called Indo-Muslim, full of energy and vitality. The old Indian master builders draw inspiration from the new ideas brought by the Muslims. The very simplicity of the Muslim creed and outlook on life influenced the architecture of the day, and brought back to it simple and noble design.

The first effect of the Muslim invasion was an exodus of people to the south. After Mahmud's raids and massacres, Islam was associated in north India with barbarous cruelty and destruction. So when the new invasion came and could not be checked, crowds of skilled craftsmen and learned men went to south India. This gave a great impetus to Aryan culture in the south.

I have told you already something of the south. How the Chalukyas were the dominant power in the

west and centre (the Maharashtra country) from the middle of the sixth century onwards for two hundred years? Hiuen Tsang visited Pulakesin II who was the ruler then. Then came the Rashtrakutas who defeated the Chalukyas and dominated the south for another two hundred years, from the eighth to nearly the end of the tenth century. These Rashtrakutas were on the best of terms with the Arab rulers of Sind. Many Arab traders and travellers came. One such traveller has left an account of his visit. He tells us that the ruler of the Rashtrakutas of the time (ninth century) was one of the four great monarchs of the world. The other three great monarchs were, in his opinion, the Khalif of Baghdad, the Emperor of China, and the Emperor of Rum (that is, Constantinople). This is interesting as showing what the prevalent opinion in Asia must have been at the time. For an Arab traveller to compare the kingdom of the Rashtrakutas with the Khalif's empire, when Baghdad was at the height of its glory and power, means that this kingdom of Maharashtra must have been very strong and powerful.

These Rashtrakutas give place again to the Chalukyas in the tenth century (973 A.C.) and these remain in power again for over two hundred years (up to 1190 A.C.). There is a long poem about one of these Chalukyan Kings, and in this it is stated that he was chosen by his wife at a public *swayamvar*. It is interesting to find this old Aryan custom surviving for so long.

Further south and east in India lay the Tamil country. Here from the third century to the ninth, for about six hundred years, the Pallavas ruled; and for two hundred years, beginning from the middle of the sixth century, they dominated the South. You will remember that it was these Pallavas who sent out colonising expeditions to Malaysia and the eastern islands. The capital of the Pallava state was Kanchi or Conjeevaram, a beautiful city then, and even now remarkable for its wise town-planning.

The Pallavas give place to the aggressive Cholas early in the tenth century. I have told you something of the Chola Empire of Rajaraja and Rajendra, who built great fleets and went conquering to Ceylon, Burma and Bengal. More interesting is the information we have of the elective village *panchāyat* system they had. This system was built up from below, village unions electing many committees to look after various kinds of work, and also electing district unions. Several districts formed a province. I have often, in these letters, laid stress on this village *panchāyat* system as this was the backbone of the old Aryan polity.

About the time of the Afghan invasions in north India, the Cholas were dominant in south India. Soon, however, they began to decline, and a little kingdom, which was subordinate to them, became independent and grew in power. This was the Pandya Kingdom, with Madura for its capital and Kayal as its port. A famous traveller from Venice, Marco Polo, about whom I shall have something more to say later, visited Kayal, the port twice, in 1288 and in 1293. He describes the town as "a great and noble city", full of ships from Arabia and China, and humming with business. Marco himself came by ship from China.

Marco Polo also tells us that the finest muslins, which "look like tissue of spider's web", were made on the east coast of India. Marco mentions that a lady—Rudramani Devi—was the queen in the Telugu country, that is the east coast north of Madras. This lady ruled for forty years and she is highly praised by Marco.

Another interesting piece of information we get from Marco is that large numbers of horses were imported into south India by sea from Arabia and Persia. The climate of the south was not suitable for horse breeding. It is said that one of the reasons why the Muslim invaders of India were better fighters was their possession of the better horses. The best horse breeding grounds in Asia were under their control.

The Pandya Kindgom was thus the leading Tamil

power in the thirteenth century, when the Cholas declined. Early in the fourteenth century (in 1310) the Muslim wedge of invasion reached south. It drove into the Pandya kingdom, which rapidly collapsed.

I have surveyed south Indian history in this letter, and perhaps repeated what I had previously said. But the subject is a little confusing and people get mixed up with the Pallavas and the Chalukyas and Cholas and the rest of them. And yet if you look at it as a whole you may be able to fit in the broad framework in your mind. Ashoka, you will remember, ruled over the whole of India (except for a tiny tip at the bottom) and Afghanistan and part of Central Asia. After him rose, in the south, the Andhra power, which extended right across the Dekhan, and lasted for four hundred years, about the time the Kushans had their borderland empire in the north. As the Telugu Andhras go down, the Tamil Pallavas rise on the east coast and the south and for a very long period they hold sway. They colonise in Malaysia. After six hundred years of rule, they give place to the Cholas, who conquer distant lands and sweep the seas with their navies. Three hundred years later they retire from the scene, and the Pandyan kingdom emerges into prominence, and the city of Madura becomes a centre of culture and Kayal a great and busy port in touch with distant countries.

So much for the south and east. On the west, in the Maharashtra country, there were the Chalukyas and then the Rashtrakutas, and then again for a second time, the Chalukyas.

All these are just names. But consider the long periods for which these kingdoms lasted and the high degree of civilization attained. There was an inner strength which seems to have given more stability to them and peace than the kingdoms of Europe had. But the social structure had outlived its day and the stability had gone. It was soon to topple over as the Muslim armies moved south early in the fourteenth century.

66

THE SLAVE KINGS OF DELHI

June 24, 1932

I have told you of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, and I have also said something of the poet Firdusi who wrote the *Shāhnāma* in Persian at Mahmud's request. But I have not told you yet of another distinguished man of Mahmud's time, who came with him to the Punjab. This was Alberuni, a learned man and a scholar, very different from the fierce and bigoted warriors of the day. He travelled all over India, trying to understand the new country and its people. So keen was he to appreciate the Indian view point that he learnt Sanskrit and read for himself the principal books of the Hindus. He studied the philosophy of India and the sciences and arts as taught here. The *Bhagawad Gita* became quite a favourite of his. He went south to the Chola kingdom and was amazed at the great irrigation works he saw there. The record of his wanderings in India is one of the great travel books of old days that we still have. In a welter of destruction and massacre and intolerance, he stands out, the patient scholar, observing and learning, and trying to find out where truth lay.

After Shihab-ud-din, the Afghan, who defeated Prithwi Raj, there came a succession of Sultans of Delhi called the Slave Kings. The first of them was Qutub-ud-din. He had been a slave of Shihab-ud-din, but even slaves could rise to high positions, and he managed to become the first Sultan of Delhi. Some others after him were also originally slaves, and hence this is called the slave dynasty. They were all pretty fierce and conquest and destruction of buildings and libraries, and terrorisation went together. They were fond of build-

ing also and they liked size in building. Qutub-ud-din started building the Qutub Minar, the great tower near Delhi which you know so well. His successor, Iltutmish, finished the tower and also built near it some beautiful arches, which still exist. The materials for these buildings were almost all taken from old Indian buildings, chiefly temples. The master-builders were all of course Indian, but as I have told you they were greatly influenced by the new ideas brought by the Muslims.

Every invader of India from Mahmud of Ghazni onwards took back with him crowds of Indian artisans and master builders. The influence of Indian architecture thus spread in Central Asia.

Behar and Bengal were conquered by the Afghans with the greatest ease. They were audacious, and took the defenders completely by surprise, and audacity often pays. This conquest of Bengal is almost as surprising as the conquests of Cortés and Pizarro in America.

It was during the reign of Iltutmish (from 1211 to 1236) that a great and terrifying cloud hovered over the frontiers of India. This was composed of the Mongols under Chingez Khan. Right up to the Indus he came pursuing an enemy, but there he stopped. India escaped him. It was nearly two hundred years later that another of his breed, Timur, came down to India to massacre and destroy. But although Chingez did not come, many Mongols made a practice of raiding India and even coming right up to Lahore. They spread terror and frightened even the Sultans who sometimes bribed them off. Many thousands of them settled down in the Punjab.

Among the Sultans there is a woman named Razia. She was the daughter of Iltutmish. She seems to have been an able person and a brave fighter, but she had a hard time with her fierce Afghan nobles and the fiercer Mongols raiding the Punjab.

The Slave kings ended in 1290. Soon after, came Ala-ud-din Khilji who came to the throne by the gentle

method of murdering his uncle, who was also his father-in-law. He followed this up by having all the Muslim nobles whom he suspected of disloyalty killed. Fearing a Mongol plot he ordered that every Mongol in his territories should be killed so that "not one of the stock should be left alive upon the face of the earth". And so 20000 or 30000 of them, most of them of course quite innocent, were massacred.

I am afraid these references to massacres repeatedly are not very pleasing. Nor are they very important from the larger view-point of history. Still they help one to realise that conditions in north India at this time were far from secure or civilized. There was a reversion to some extent to barbarism. While Islam brought an element of progress to India the Moslem Afghans brought an element of barbarism. Many people mix up the two, but they should be distinguished.

Ala-ud-din was intolerant like the others. But it seems as if the outlook of these Central Asian rulers of India was now changing. They were beginning to think of India as their home. They were no longer strangers here. Ala-ud-din married a Hindu lady, and so did his son.

Under Ala-ud-din there seems to have been an attempt made to have a more or less efficient system of government. The lines of communication were especially kept in order for the movements of the army, and the army was the special care of Ala-ud-din. He made it very powerful and with it he conquered Gujrat and a great part of the South. His general returned from the south with enormous wealth. It is said that he brought 50,000 maunds of gold, and a vast quantity of jewels and pearls, and 20000 horses and 312 elephants.

Chittor, the home of romance and chivalry, full of courage, but even then old fashioned and sticking to outworn methods of warfare, was overwhelmed by Ala-ud-din's efficient army. There was a sack of Chittor in 1303. But before this could take place, the men and women of the fortress, obedient to old custom,

performed the terrible rite of *jauhar*. According to this when defeat threatens and there is no other way, in the last extremity, it was better for the men to go out and die in the field of battle and for the women to burn themselves on a pyre. A terrible thing this was, especially for the women. It would have been better if the women too had gone out sword in hand and died on the battlefield. But in any event death was preferable to slavery and degradation, as conquest in war meant in those days.

Meanwhile the people of the country, the Hindus, were being slowly converted to Islam. The process was not rapid. Some changed their religion because Islam appealed to them, some did so because of fear, some because it is natural to want to be on the winning side. But the principal reason for the change was economic. People who were not Moslems had to pay a special tax, a poll tax, *jezia* as it was called. This was a great burden on the poor. Many would change their religion just to escape it. Among the higher classes desire to gain court favour and high office was a powerful motive. Ala-ud-din's great general, Malik Kafur, who conquered the south was a convert from Hinduism.

I must tell you about another Sultan of Delhi, a most extraordinary individual. He was Mohammad bin Tughluq. He was a most learned and accomplished man both in Persian and Arabic. He had studied philosophy and logic, even Greek philosophy. He knew something of mathematics and science and medicine. He was a brave man, and was for his times quite a paragon of learning and a wonder. And yet, and yet, this paragon was a monster of cruelty and seems to have been quite mad! He came to the throne by killing his own father. He had fantastic notions of conquering Persia and China. Naturally they came to grief. But his most famous exploit was his decision to ruin Delhi, his own capital, because some of the people of the city had dared to criticize his policy in anonymous notices. He ordered that the capital should be transferred from

Delhi to Deoghiri in the south (in Hyderabad State now). This place he called Daulatabad. Some compensation was paid to the owners of houses, and then every one, without exception, was ordered to leave the city within three days.

Most people left. Some hid themselves. When they were found they were punished cruelly, even though one was a blind man and another a paralytic. It was forty days' march to Daulatabad from Delhi. One can imagine what the terrible condition of the people must have been during this march. How many must have dropped on the way.

And the city of Delhi, what became of it? Two years later Mohammad bin Tughluq tried to re-people Delhi. But he did not succeed. He had previously made it into a "perfect desert", as an eye witness tells us. It is possible to make a garden into a wilderness quickly; but it is not easy to re-convert the wilderness into a garden. Ibn Batuta, an African Moorish traveller, who was with the Sultan, returned to Delhi, and he says that "it is one of the greatest cities in the universe. When we entered this capital we found it in the state which has been described. It was empty, abandoned, and had but a small population." Another person describing the city as spreading over eight or ten miles. "All was destroyed. So complete was the ruin, that not a cat or a dog was left among the buildings of the city, in its palaces or in its suburbs."

This madman ruled as Sultan for twenty-five years, right up to 1351. It is amazing how much knavery and cruelty and incompetence in their rulers, people will put up with. But in spite of the servility of the people, Mohammad bin Tughluq was successful in breaking up his empire. The country was ruined by his mad schemes and by heavy taxation. There were famines and at last there were revolts. Even in his lifetime, from 1340 onwards, large areas of the empire became independent. Bengal became independent. In the south several States arose. Chief of these was the

Hindu State of Vijayanagar which arose in 1336 and within ten years was a great power in the south.

Near Delhi you can still see the ruins of Tughlaqabad. This was built by Mohammad's father.

67

CHENGIZ KHAN SHAKES UP ASIA AND EUROPE

June 25, 1932

In many of my recent letters I have referred to the Mongols and hinted at the terror and destruction that they caused. In China our account of the Sung dynasty stopped with the coming of the Mongols. In west Asia again we come up against them and there is an end of the old order. In India, the slave kings escaped them, but none the less they created enough commotion. All Asia seems to have been held up and brought low by these nomads from Mongolia. And not Asia only but half Europe too. Who were these amazing people who suddenly burst forth and astounded the world? The Scythians and the Huns and Turks and the Tartars—all from Central Asia—had already played a notable part in history. Some of these peoples were still prominent; the Seljuq Turks in west Asia, the Tartars in north China and elsewhere. But the Mongols had so far done nothing much. No one in western Asia probably knew much about them. They belonged to many unimportant tribes in Mongolia and were subject to the Kin Tartars, who had conquered the north of China.

Suddenly they seemed to gain power. Their scattered tribes joined together and elected a single leader, the Great Khan, and swore allegiance and obedience to him. Under him they marched to Pekin and put an end to the Kin Empire. They marched west and swept the great kingdoms they found on their way. They went to Russia and subdued it. Later they wiped off completely Baghdad and its empire and went right

up to Poland and central Europe. There was none to stop them. India escaped by a sheer chance. One can well imagine what the amazement of the Eurasian world must have been at this volcanic eruption. It almost seemed like a great natural calamity, like an earthquake, before which man can do little.

Strong men and women they were, these nomads from Mongolia, used to hardship, and living in tents on the wide steppes of north Asia. But their strength and hard training might not have availed them much if they had not produced a chief who was a most remarkable man. This was the person who is known as Chengiz Khan (or Genghiz or Jenghiz or Jengiz Khan—there are many ways of spelling it). He was born in 1155 A.C. and his original name was Timuchin. His father, Yesugei-Bagatur, died when he was a little boy. 'Bagatur', by the way was a favourite name for Mongol nobles. It means 'hero' and I suppose the Urdu 'bahadur' comes from it.

Although just a little boy of ten, with no one to help him, he struggled on and on and ultimately made good. Step by step he advanced till at last the great Mongol Assembly, called the "Kurultai", met and elected him the Great Khan or Kagan or Emperor. A few years before he had been given the name of Chengiz.

A "Secret History of the Mongol People" written in the thirteenth century, and published in China in the 14th century, describes this election: "And so, when all the generations living in felt tents became united under a single authority, in the year of the Leopard, they assembled near the sources of the Onon, and raising the White Banner on Nine Legs, they conferred on Chengiz the title of Kagan."

Chengiz was already 51 years of age when he became the Great Khan or Kagan. He was not very young, and most people at this age want peace and quiet. But this was only the beginning of his career of conquest. This is worthy of notice as most great conquerors do their conquering when fairly young.

This also reminds us that Chengiz did not simply dash across Asia in a fit of youthful enthusiasm. He was a cautious and careful old man and every big thing he did was preceded by thought and preparation.

The Mongols were nomads, hating cities and the ways of cities. Many people think that because they were nomads they must have been barbarians. But this is a mistaken idea. They did not know, of course, many of the city arts, but they had developed a way of life of their own and had an intricate organization. If they won great victories on the field of battle, it was not because of their numbers but because of their discipline and organization. And above all it was due to the brilliant captainship of Chengiz. For Chengiz is, without doubt, the greatest military genius and leader in history. Alexander and Cæsar seem petty before him. Chengiz was not only himself a very great commander but he trained many of his generals and made them brilliant leaders. Thousands of miles away from their homelands, surrounded by enemies and a hostile population, they carried on victorious warfare against superior numbers.

What was the map of Asia and Europe when Chengiz appeared striding over it? China to the east and south of Mongolia was split up. To the south was the Sung Empire where the Southern Sungs held sway; to the north, with Pekin for their capital, was the empire of the Kin or Golden Tartars, who had driven out the Sungs; to the west, over the Gobi desert and beyond, was the Hsia or Tangut Empire, also nomadic. In India we have seen that Slave Kings ruled in Delhi. In Persia and Mesopotamia, right up to the frontiers of India, there was the great Muslim kingdom of Khwarazm or Khiva, with its capital at Samarkand. West of this were the Seljuqs, and in Egypt and Palestine the successors of Saladin. Round Baghdad, the Khalif ruled under the protection of the Seljuqs.

This was the period of the later Crusades. Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, the *stupor mundi*, was the

Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. In England it was the period of Magna Charta and after. In France, King Louis IX reigned, who went to the Crusades, got captured by the Turks and was then ransomed. In east Europe, there was Russia, apparently divided into two States, that of Novgorod in the north and Kieff in the south. Between Russia and the Empire were Hungary and Poland. The Byzantine Empire still flourished round Constantinople.

Chengiz prepared carefully for his conquests. He trained his army and, above all, he trained his horses and remounts, for to a nomad people nothing is more important than horses. He then marched east and almost put an end to the Kin Empire of north China and Manchuria, and took Peking. He subdued Korea. He appears to have been on good terms with the Southern Sungs who even helped him against the Kins, not realising that their turn might come next. Chengiz also conquered the Tanguts later.

After these victories Chengiz might have rested. He seems to have had no desire to invade the west. He wanted friendly relations with the Shah or King of Khwarazm. But this was not to be. There is an old Latin saying which means that those whom the gods wish to destroy they first drive mad. The Shah of Khwarazm was bent on bringing about his own destruction and he did everything to accomplish this. Mongol merchants were massacred by a governor of his. Chengiz even then wanted peace and sent ambassadors asking that the governor be punished. But the foolish Shah, vain and full of his own importance, insulted these ambassadors and had them put to death. This was more than Chengiz could stand; but he was not to be hurried. He made careful preparation and then marched with his host westward.

This march, begun in 1219, opened the eyes of Asia, and partly of Europe too, to this new terror, this great roller which came on inexorably, crushing down cities and men by the million. The empire of Khwar-

azm ceased to exist. The great city of Bokhara, full of palaces, and with over a million population, was reduced to ashes. Samarkand, the capital, was destroyed, and out of a million people that lived there, only 50000 remained alive. Herat, Balkh and many other flourishing cities were all destroyed. Millions were killed. All the arts and crafts that had flourished in Central Asia for hundreds of years disappeared, civilized life seemed to cease in Persia and in Central Asia. There was desert, where Chengiz had passed.

The son of the Shah of Khwarazm, Jalaluddin, fought bravely against this flood. He retreated right up to the Indus river and, pressed hard there, he is said to have jumped on horse back thirty feet down into the great river and swum across. He found shelter at the Delhi court. Chengiz did not think it worthwhile to pursue him there.

Fortunately for the Seljuq Turks and Baghdad, Chengiz left them in peace and marched north into Russia. He defeated and took prisoner the Grand Duke of Kieff. He returned east to crush a rebellion of Hsias or Tanguts.

Chengiz died in 1227 at the age of 72. His empire extended from the Black Sea in the west to the Pacific Ocean and it was still vigorous and growing. His capital was still the little town of Karakorum in Mongolia. Nomad as he was, he was an extremely able organiser and he was wise enough to employ able ministers to help him. His empire, so rapidly conquered, did not break up at his death.

To Persian and Arab historians Chengiz is a monster, the 'Scourge of God' as he is called. He is painted as a very cruel person. He was very cruel no doubt but he was not very different from many of the rulers of his day. In India the Afghan Kings were much the same, on a smaller scale. When Ghazni was captured by the Afghans in 1150 they revenged themselves for an old blood feud by sacking and burning the city. For seven days "plunder, devastation and slaughter were

continuous. Every man that was found was slain, and all the women and children were made prisoners. All the palaces and edifices of the Mahmudi Kings (that is descendants of Sultan Mahmud) which had no equals in the world were destroyed." This was the behaviour of Muslims towards brother Muslims. There was nothing to choose in quality between this and what took place in India under the Afghan kings and Chengiz's career of destruction in Central Asia and Persia. Chengiz was particularly angry with Khwarazm because his ambassador had been killed by the Shah. For him it was a kind of blood feud. Elsewhere there was great destruction done by Chengiz. But perhaps it was not so great as in Central Asia.

There was another motive behind Chengiz's destruction of towns. He had the spirit of a nomad and he hated towns and cities. He liked living in the steppes or great plains. At one time Chengiz considered the desirability of destroying all the cities in China, but fortunately he desisted! His idea was to combine civilization with a nomadic life. But this was not, and is not, possible.

You might perhaps think from Chengiz Khan's name that he was a Mohammedan. But this was not so. The name is a Mongol name. Chengiz was a very tolerant person in religion. His religion, such as it was, was Shamaism, a worship of the "Everlasting Blue Sky." He used to have long talks with Chinese Tao-ist sages, but he stuck to Shamaism, and when in difficulty, consulted the sky.

You must have noticed, earlier in this letter, that Chengiz was 'elected' Great Khan by an assembly of the Mongols. This assembly was really a feudal assembly, not a popular one, and Chengiz was thus the feudal head of the clan.

He was illiterate and so also were all his followers. Probably he did not even know that there was such a thing as writing for a long time. Messages were sent by word of mouth and were usually in verse in the form

of allegories and proverbs. It is amazing how business could be carried on in a vast empire by means of oral messages. When Chengiz learnt that there was such a thing as writing he felt immediately that this was very useful and valuable, and he ordered his sons and chief officers to learn it. He also ordered that the old customary law of the Mongols must be put down in writing, also his own sayings. The idea was that this customary law was the "unchangeable law" for ever and ever and no one could disobey it. Even the emperor was subject to it. But this "unchangeable law" is lost now and even the present day Mongols have no recollection or tradition of it.

Every country and every religion has its old customary law and written law, and often it imagines that this is the "unchangeable law" which will endure for ever. Sometimes it is considered as "revelation", that is something "revealed" by God, and what God is supposed to reveal cannot be considered as changing or transitory. But laws are meant to fit existing conditions, and they are meant to help us to better ourselves. If conditions change, how can the old laws fit in? They must change with changing conditions, or else they become iron chains keeping us back while the world marches on. No law can be an "unchangeable law." It must be based on knowledge, and as knowledge grows, it must grow with it.

I have given you some more details and information about Chengiz Khan than was perhaps necessary. But the man fascinates me! Strange, is it not, that this fierce and cruel and violent feudal chief of a nomadic tribe should fascinate a peaceful and non-violent and mild person like me, who am a dweller of cities and a hater of everything feudal!

68

THE MONGOLS DOMINATE THE WORLD

June 26, 1932

When Chengiz Khan died his son, Oghotai, became the Great Khan. Compared to Chengiz and to the Mongols of his time, he was humane and peacefully inclined. He was fond of saying that: "Our Kangan Chengiz built up our imperial house with great labour. Now it is time to give the peoples peace and prosperity, and to alleviate their burdens." Notice how he thinks as a feudal chief, in terms of his clan.

But the era of conquest was not over and the Mongols were still overflowing with energy. There was a second invasion of Europe under the great general Sabutai. The armies and generals of Europe were no match for Sabutai. Carefully preparing his ground by sending spies and advance agents to the enemy countries to bring information, he knew well what the political and military situation of these countries was, before he advanced. On the field of battle he was the master of the art of war and the European generals seemed to be just beginners at it in comparison with him. Sabutai marched straight to Russia, leaving Baghdad and the Seljuqs in peace on the south-west. For six years he marched on and on, plundering and destroying Moscow, Kiev, Poland, Hungary, Cracow. In 1241 a Polish and German army was annihilated at Leibnitz in Lower Silesia in Central Europe. The whole of Europe seemed to be doomed. There was nobody to stop the Mongols. Frederick II, wonder of the world though he was called, must have paled before this real wonder which had come out of Mongolia. The kings and rulers of Europe gasped, when suddenly unexpected relief came.

Oghotai had died and there was some trouble about the succession. So the Mongol armies in Europe, undefeated as they were, turned back and marched east to their homelands in 1242. Europe breathed again.

Meanwhile the Mongols had spread in China and finished off completely the Kins in the north and even the Sungs in South China. Mangu Khan became the Great Khan in 1252 and he appointed Kublai the Governor of China. To Mangu's court at Karakorum came a great concourse of people from Asia and Europe. Still the Great Khan lived in tents, after the way of the nomads. But the tents were rich and full of the plunder and wealth of continents. Merchants came, especially Moslem merchants, and found the Mongols generous buyers. Artisans and astrologers and mathematicians and men who dabbled in the science of the day, all gathered together in this city of tents which seemed to lord it over the world. There was a measure of peace and order over the vast Mongol Empire and the great caravan routes across the continents were full of people going to and fro. Europe and Asia were brought in closer contact.

And then there was a race between the men of religion to Karakorum. They all wanted to convert these conquerors of the world to their own particular brand of religion. The religion that succeeded in getting these all-powerful people on its side would surely itself become all-powerful and would triumph over all others. The Pope sent envoys from Rome; the Nestorian Christians came; the Moslems were there; and so also were the Buddhists. The Mongols were in no great hurry to adopt any new religion. They were not an over-religious people. It appears that at one time the Great Khan flirted with the idea of adopting Christianity, but he could not tolerate the claims of the Pope. Ultimately the Mongols drifted into the religions of the areas where they settled down. In China and Mongolia most of them became Buddhists; in Central Asia, they became Moslems; perhaps some in Russia and in Hungary be-

came Christians.

There is still in existence in the Pope's library at the Vatican in Rome, an original letter of the Great Khan (Mangu) to the Pope. It is in Arabic. It appears that the Pope had sent an envoy warning the new Khan, after Oghotai's death, not to invade Europe again. The Khan replied that he had invaded Europe as the Europeans did not behave properly towards him.

Yet another wave of conquest and destruction took place in Mangu's time. His brother Hulagu was governor in Persia. Annoyed with the Khalif at Baghdad at something, Hulagu sent a message to him chiding him for not keeping his promises and telling him to behave better in future or else he would lose his empire. The Khalif was not a very wise man, nor could he profit by experience. He sent an offensive reply and the Mongol envoys were insulted by a mob in Baghdad. Hulagu's Mongol blood was up at this. In a rage he marched on Baghdad and after forty days' siege he took it. That was the end of the city of the Arabian Nights and all the treasures that had accumulated there during five hundred years of empire. The Khalif and his sons and near relatives were put to death. There was a general massacre for weeks till the river Tigris was dyed red with blood for miles. It is said that a million and half people perished. All the artistic and literary treasures and libraries were destroyed. Baghdad was utterly ruined. Even the ancient irrigation system of western Asia, thousands of years old, was destroyed by Hulagu.

Aleppo and Edessa and many another city shared the same fate and the shadow of night fell over western Asia. A historian of the time says that this was a "period of famine for science and virtue." A Mongol army sent to Palestine was defeated by Sultan Baibers of Egypt. This Sultan had an interesting surname—"Bandukdar"—because of a regiment of men armed with 'banduks' or firearms. We now come to the era of the firearms. The Chinese had long known gunpowder. The Mongols probably learnt it from them

and, it may be, that firearms helped them in their victories. It was through the Mongols that firearms were introduced to Europe.

The destruction of Baghdad in 1258 put an end finally to what remained of the Abbaside Empire. This was the end of the distinctive Arab civilization in western Asia. Far away in southern Spain, Granada still carried on the Arab tradition. It was to last for over two hundred years more before it too collapsed. Arabia itself sank rapidly in importance and its people have played no great part in history since. Later they became parts of the Ottoman Turkish Empire. During the Great War of 1914-18 there was an Arab rebellion against the Turks, engineered by the English, and since then Arabia has been more or less independent.

There was no Khalif for two years. Then Sultan Baibers of Egypt nominated a relative of the last Abbaside Khalif as Khalif. But he had no political power. He was just a spiritual head. Three hundred years later the Turkish Sultan of Constantinople obtained this title of Khalif from the last holder. The Turkish Sultans continued to be Khalifs till both Sultan and Khalif were ended a few years ago by Mustafa Kamal Pasha.

I have digressed from my story. Mangu, the Great Khan, died in 1239. He had conquered Tibet before his death. Kublai Khan, the Governor of China, now became the Great Khan. Kublai had long been in China and this country interested him. He therefore moved his capital from Karakorum to Peking, changing the name of the city to Khanbalik, the 'City of the Khan'. Kublai's interest in Chinese affairs made him neglect his great empire, and gradually the great Mongol Governors became independent.

Kublai completed the conquest of China, but his campaigns were very different from the old Mongol campaigns. There was much less cruelty and destruction. China had already toned down and civilized Kublai. The Chinese also took to him kindly and treated him almost as one of themselves. He actually found-

ed an orthodox Chinese dynasty—the Yuan dynasty. Kublai added Tongking, Annam and Burma to his empire. He tried to conquer Japan and Malaysia but failed because the Mongols were not used to the sea and did not know ship building.

During the reign of Mangu Khan, an interesting embassy came to him from the King of France—Louis IX. Louis suggested an alliance between the Mongols and the Christian powers of Europe against the Muslims. Poor Louis had had a bad time as he was taken prisoner during the Crusades. But the Mongols were not interested in such alliances; nor were they interested in attacking any religious people as such.

Why should they ally themselves with the petty kings and princes of Europe? And against whom? They had little to fear from the fighting qualities of the western European States or of the Islamic States. It was by sheer chance that western Europe escaped them. The Seljuq Turks bowed down to them and paid tribute. Only the Sultan of Egypt had defeated a Mongol army, but there is little doubt that they could have subdued him if they seriously attempted it. Right across Asia and Europe the mighty Mongol Empire sprawled. There had never been in history anything to compare with the Mongol conquests; there had never been such a vast empire. The Mongols must indeed have seemed at the time the lords of the world. India was free from them at the time simply because they had not gone that way. Western Europe, just about the size of India, was also outside the empire. But all these places existed almost on sufferance and so long as the Mongols did not take it into their heads to swallow them up. So it must have seemed in the thirteenth century.

But the tremendous energy of the Mongol seemed to be lessening; the impulse to go on conquering waned. You must remember that in those days people moved slowly on foot or on horseback. There were no quicker methods of locomotion. For an army to go from its home in Mongolia to the western frontier of the empire

in Europe would itself take a year of journeying. They were not keen enough on conquest to take these mighty journeys through their own empire, when there was no chance of plunder. Besides, repeated success in war and plunder had made the Mongol troopers rich in booty. Many of them may have even had slaves. So they quietened down and began to take to sober and peaceful ways. The man who has got all he wants is all in favour of peace and order!

The administration of the vast Mongol Empire must have been a very difficult task. It is not surprising therefore that it began to split up. Kublai Khan died in 1292. After him there was no Great Khan. The Empire divided up into five big areas:

(1) The empire of China including Mongolia and Manchuria and Tibet. This was the principal one, under Kublai's descendants of the Yuan dynasty;

(2) To the far west in Russia, Poland and Hungary, was the empire of the Golden Horde (as the Mongols there were called);

(3) In Persia and Mesopotamia and part of Central Asia, there was the Ilkhan empire—which had been founded by Hulagu, and to which the Seljuq Turks paid tribute;

(4) North of Tibet in Central Asia there was Great Turkey, as it was called, the empire of Zagatai; and

(5) Between Mongolia and the Golden Horde, there was a Siberian empire of the Mongols.

Although the great Mongol empire was split up, each one of these five divisions of it were mighty empires.

69

MARCO POLO, THE GREAT TRAVELLER

June 27, 1932

I have told you of the court of the Great Khan at Karakorum; how crowds of merchants and artisans and learned men and missionaries came there, attracted by the fame of the Mongols and the glamour of their victories. They came also because the Mongols encouraged them to do so. They were a strange people, these Mongols; highly efficient in some ways, and almost childish in other matters. Even their ferocity and cruelty, shocking as it was, has a childish element in it. It is this childishness in them, I think, that makes these fierce warriors rather attractive. Some hundreds of years later a Mongol, or Mughal, as they were called in India, conquered this country. He was Baber and his mother was a descendant of Chengiz Khan. Having conquered India, he sighed for the cool breezes and the flowers and gardens and water-melons of Kabul and the north. He was a delightful person and the memoirs that he wrote make him still a very human and attractive figure.

So the Mongols encouraged visitors from abroad to their courts. They had a desire for knowledge and wanted to learn from them. You will remember my telling you that as soon as Chengiz Khan learned that there was such a thing as writing, he immediately grasped the significance of it and ordered his officers to learn it. They had open and receptive minds and could learn from others. Kublai Khan, after settling down in Peking, and becoming a respectable Chinese monarch, especially encouraged visitors from foreign countries. To him journeyed two merchants from Venice, the brothers

Nicolo Polo and Maffeo Polo. They had gone right up to Bokhara in quest of business, and there they met some envoys sent by Kublai Khan to Hulagu in Persia. They were induced to join this caravan and thus they journeyed to the court of the Great Khan in Peking.

Nicolo and Maffeo were well received by Kublai Khan and they told him about Europe and Christianity and the Pope. Kublai was greatly interested and seems to have been attracted towards Christianity. He sent the Polos back to Europe in 1269 with a message for the Pope. He asked that a hundred learned men, "intelligent men acquainted with the seven arts" and able to justify Christianity, be sent to him. But the two Polos on their return found Europe and the Pope in a bad way. There were no such hundred learned men to be had. After two years' delay they journeyed back with two Christian friars or monks. What was far more important, they took with them Nicolo's son, a young man named Marco.

The three Polos started on their tremendous journey and crossed the whole length of Asia by the land routes. What mighty journeys they were! Even now, to follow the route of the Polos would take the best part of a year. Partly the Polos followed the old route of Hiuen Tsang. They went *via* Palestine to Armenia and then to Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf, when they met merchants from India. Across Persia to Balkh, and over the mountains to Kashgar, and then to Khotan and the Lop-Nor, the Wandering Lake. Again the desert, and so on to the fields of China and Peking. They had a sovereign pass port with them—a gold tablet given by the Great Khan himself.

This was the old caravan route between China and Syria, in the days of ancient Rome. A short while ago I read of a journey across the Gobi Desert by Sven Hedin, the Swedish explorer and traveller. He went from Peking west, crossing the desert, touching the Lake—Lop-Nor—on to Khotan and beyond. He had every modern convenience with him and yet his expedition had

to face trouble and suffering. What must the journey have been like seven hundred and thirteen hundred years ago, when the Polos and Hiuen Tsang went that way! Sven Hedin made an interesting discovery. He found that Lop-Nor, the lake, had changed its position. Long ago, in the fourth century, the river Tarin, which flows into the Lop-Nor, changed its course, and the desert sands quickly came and covered its old deserted course. The old city of Loulan that stood there was cut off from the outside world and its inhabitants left it to its ruin. The lake also changed its position because of this river, and the old caravan and trade route did likewise. Sven Hedin found that very recently, only a few years ago, the Tarin river had again changed its course and gone back to its old position. The lake has followed it. Again the Tarin goes by the ruins of the old city of Loulan, and, it may be, that the old route, unused for sixteen hundred years, may again come into fashion, but the place of the camel may be taken by the motor car. It is because of this that Lop-Nor is called the Wandering Lake. I have told you of the wanderings of the Tarin river and the Lop-Nor as it will give some idea of how water courses change large areas and thus affect history. Central Asia, in the old days, as we have seen, had a teeming population; and wave after wave of its people went conquering to the west and to the south. To-day it is almost a deserted area, with few towns and a sparse population. Probably there was much more water there at that time and so it could support a big population. As the climate became drier and water less abundant, the population lessened and dwindled away.

There was one advantage in these long journeys. One had time to learn the new language or languages. The three Polos took three and a half years to reach Peking from Venice, and during this long period Marco mastered the Mongol language, and perhaps Chinese also. Marco became a favourite with the Great Khan and for nearly seventeen years he served him. He was made

governor and went on official missions to different parts of China. Although Marco and his father were homesick and wanted to return to Venice, it was not easy to get the Khan's permission. At last they had a chance of returning. The Mongol ruler of the Ilkhan Empire in Persia, who was a cousin of Kublai's, lost his wife. He wanted to marry again but his old wife had made him promise not to marry any woman outside their clan. So Argon (that was his name) sent envoys to Kublai Khan to Peking and begged him to send a suitable woman of the clan to him.

Kublai Khan selected a young Mongol princess, and the three Polos were added to her escort as they were experienced travellers. They went by sea from the south of China to Sumatra and stayed there for some time. The Buddhist empire of Sri Vijaya flourished in Sumatra then, but it was shrinking. From Sumatra the party came to South India. I have already told you of Marco's visit to the flourishing port of Kayal in the Pandya kingdom of the South India. The princess and Marco and the party made a fairly long stay in India. They seemed to have been in no hurry, and it took them two years to reach Persia. But meanwhile the expectant bridegroom had died! He had waited long enough. Perhaps it was not such a great misfortune that he died. The young princess married Argon's son, who was much more her age.

The Polos left the princess and went on towards home *via* Constantinople. They reached Venice in 1295, twenty-four years after they had left it. No one recognised them, and, it is said, that to impress their old friends and others, they gave a feast and, in the middle of it, they ripped open their shabby and padded clothes. Immediately valuable jewels—diamonds, rubies, emeralds and other kinds—came out in heaps and astonished the guests. But still, few people believed the stories of the Polos about their adventures in China and India. They thought that Marco and his father and uncle were exaggerating. Used to their little republic

of Venice, they could not imagine the size and wealth of China and Asiatic countries.

Three years later, in 1295, Venice went to war with the city of Genoa. They were both sea powers and rivals of each other, and there was a great naval battle between them. The Venetians got beaten and many thousands of them were made prisoners by the Genoese. Among these prisoners was our friend Marco Polo. Sitting in his prison in Genoa, he wrote, or rather dictated, an account of his travels. In this way the "Travels of Marco Polo" came into existence. What a useful place prison is to do good work!

In these travels Marco describes China especially, and the many journeys he made through it; he also describes to some extent Siam, Java, Sumatra, Ceylon and South India. He tells us of the great Chinese sea-ports crowded with ships from all parts of the orient, some so large as to carry crews of 300 or 400 men. He describes China as a smiling and prosperous country with many cities and boroughs; and manufactures of "cloth of silk and gold and many fine taffetas"; and "fine vineyards and fields and gardens"; and "excellent hostelries for travellers" all along the routes. He tells of a special messenger service for imperial messages. These messages travelled at the rate of four hundred miles in twenty-four hours by relays of horses—which is very good going indeed. We are informed that the people of China use black stones, which they dug out of the ground, in place of firewood. This obviously means that they worked coal mines and used coal as fuel. Kublai Khan issued paper money, that is, he issued paper notes with the promise to pay in gold, as is done to-day. This is most interesting as showing that a modern method of creating credit was used by him. Marco mentioned, much to the excitement and amazement of people in Europe, that a Christian colony, under a ruler, Prester John, lived in China. Probably these were some old nestorians in Mongolia.

About Japan and Burma and India, he also wrote:

sometimes what he had seen, and sometimes what he had heard. Marco's story was, and still is, a wonderful story of travel. To the people of Europe in their tight little countries with their petty jealousies, it was an eye-opener. It brought home to them the greatness and wealth and marvels of the larger world. It excited their imaginations, and called to their sense of adventure, and tickled their cupidity. It induced them to take to the sea more. Europe was growing. Its young civilization was finding its feet and struggling against the restrictions of the middle ages. It was full of energy, like a youth on the verge of manhood. This urge to the sea and the quest of wealth and adventure carried the European later to America, round the Cape of Good Hope, to the Pacific, to India, to China and Japan. The sea became the high way of the world, and the great caravan routes across continents lessened in importance.

The Great Khan, Kublai, died soon after Marco Polo left him. The Yuan dynasty, which he had founded in China did not long survive him. The Mongol power declined rapidly and there was a Chinese nationalist wave against the foreigner. Within sixty years the Mongols had been driven from South China, and a Chinaman had established himself as emperor at Nanking. In another dozen years—in 1368—the Yuan dynasty fell finally and the Mongols were driven beyond the Great Wall. Another great Chinese dynasty—the "Tai Ming" dynasty—comes upon the scene now. For a long period, nearly three hundred years, this dynasty ruled in China, and this period is looked upon as one of good government, prosperity and culture. No attempt was made at foreign conquests or imperialistic ventures.

The break up of the Mongol Empire in China resulted in ending the intercourse between China and Europe. The land routes were not safe now. The sea routes were not much in use yet.

THE ROMAN CHURCH BECOMES MILITANT

June 28, 1932

I have told you that Kublai Khan sent a message to the Pope asking him to send a hundred learned men to China. But the Pope did no such thing. He was in a bad way at the time. If you remember it, this was the period after the death of Emperor Frederick II, when there was no emperor from 1250 to 1273. Central Europe was in a frightful condition then and there was disorder and robber knights plundering everywhere. Rudolph of Hapsburg became Emperor in 1273, but this did not improve matters much. Italy was lost to the Empire.

Not only was there political disorder, but there were the beginnings of what might be called religious disorder, from the point of view of the Roman Church. People were not so docile and obedient to the orders of the Church. They had begun to doubt, and doubt is a dangerous thing in matters religious. Already we have seen the Emperor Frederick II treating the Pope casually and not caring much about being ex-communicated. He even started an argument with him in writing, and the Pope did not come off well in this argument. There must have been many doubters like Frederick in Europe in his time. There were many also who, though not doubting or objecting to the claims of the Church or the Pope, resented the corruption and luxury of the big men of the Church.

The Crusades were tapering off rather ignominiously. They had started off with great hopes and enthusiasm, but they failed to achieve anything, and such failures always bring about a reaction. Not wholly

satisfied with the Church as it was, people began, rather vaguely and gradually, to look elsewhere for light. The Church retaliated by violence, and tried to retain control over men's minds by methods of terrorism. It forgot that the mind of man is a very tricky thing and brute force is a poor weapon against it. So it tried to strangle the stirrings of conscience in individuals and groups; it tried to meet doubt not by argument and reason, but by the club and the stake.

As early as 1155, the wrath of the Church fell on a popular and earnest preacher, Arnold of Brescia in Italy. Arnold preached against the corruption and luxury of the clergy. He was seized, hung, and then his dead body was burnt and the ashes thrown into the river Tiber, so that people might not keep them as relics! To the last Arnold was constant and calm.

The Popes even went so far as to declare whole groups and Christian sects, who differed in some small matter of belief or who criticised the clergy too much, as outcasts. Regular crusades were proclaimed against these people and every kind of disgusting cruelty and frightfulness was practised against them. In this way were treated the Albigeois (or the Albigenses) of Toulouse in the south of France, and the Waldenses, the followers of a man named Waldo.

About this time, or rather a little earlier, there lived a man in Italy who is one of the most attractive figures in Christianity. He was Francis of Assisi. He was a rich man who gave up his riches, and, taking a vow of poverty, went out into the world to serve the sick and the poor. And because lepers were the most unhappy and uncared for, he devoted himself especially to them. He founded an order—the Order of St. Francis, it is called—something like the Sangha of the Buddha. He went about preaching and serving from place to place, trying to live as Christ had lived. Great numbers of people came to him and many became his disciples. He even went to Egypt and Palestine, while the Crusades were going on. But, Christian as he was, the Moslems

respected this gentle and lovable person, and did not interfere with him in any way. He lived from 1181 to 1226. His Order came into conflict with the high officials of the Church after his death. Perhaps the Church did not fancy this stress on a life of poverty. They had outgrown this primitive Christian doctrine. Four Franciscan friars were burnt alive as heretics in Marseilles in 1318.

A few years ago there was a great celebration at the little town of Assisi in honour of St. Francis. I forget why it was held then. Probably it was the seven hundredth anniversary of his death.

Like the Franciscan Order, but very unlike it in spirit, another Order rose inside the Church. This was founded by St. Dominic, a Spaniard, and it is called the Dominican Order. This was aggressive and orthodox. To them everything was to be subordinated to the grand duty of maintaining the faith. If this could not be done by persuasion, then it would be done by violence.

The Church started the reign of violence in religion, formally and officially, in 1233 by starting what is called the Inquisition. This was a kind of court which inquired into the orthodoxy of people's beliefs, and if they did not come up to the standard, their usual punishment was death by burning. There was a regular hunt for "heretics" and hundreds of them were burnt at the stake. Even worse than this burning was the torture inflicted on them to make them recant. Many poor unfortunate women were accused of being witches and were burnt. But this was often done, and especially in England and Scotland, by the mob, and not by order of the Inquisition.

The Pope issued an "Edict of Faith" calling upon every man to be an informer! He condemned chemistry and called it a diabolical art. And all this violence and terror was done in all honesty. Honestly they believed that by burning the man at the stake, they were saving his soul or the souls of other people! Men of religion have often thrust themselves on others, forc-

ed down their own views on them and believed that they were doing a public service. In the name of God they have killed and murdered; and talking about saving the "immortal soul", they have not hesitated to reduce the mortal body to ashes. The record of religion is very bad. But I do not think there is anything to beat the Inquisition for cold-blooded cruelty. And yet it is an amazing thing that many of the men who were responsible for this did it, not for any personal gain, but in the firm belief that they were doing the right thing.

While the Popes were letting loose this reign of terror on Europe, they were losing the commanding position they had come to occupy, as the lords of kings and emperors. The days of their excommunicating an emperor and frightening him into submission were gone. When the Holy Roman Empire was in a bad way, and there was no emperor, or the emperor kept far from Rome, the King of France began to interfere with the Popes. In 1303, the King was displeased at something the Pope had done. He sent a man to him, who forced his way to the Pope's bedroom in his own palace, and insulted him to his face. There was no disapproval of this insulting treatment in any country. Compare this with the bare-footed emperor in the snow at Canossa!

A few years later, in 1309, a new Pope, who was a Frenchman, took up his residence at Avignon, which is now in France. Here the Popes lived till 1377 very much under the influence of the French Kings. Next year, in 1378, there was a split in the College of Cardinals, called the Great Schism. Two Popes were elected, one by each group of cardinals. One Pope lived at Rome and the Emperor and most countries of north Europe acknowledged him; the other, who came to be called the anti-Pope, lived at Avignon, and the King of France and some of his allies supported him. For forty years this continued and Pope and anti-Pope cursed each other and excommunicated each other. In 1417 there was a compromise and a new Pope, living in Rome, was elected by both parties. But this unseemly quarrel be-

tween two Popes must have had a very great effect on the people of Europe. If the vicars and representatives of God on earth, as they called themselves, behave in this way, people begin to doubt their holiness and bona fides. So this quarrel helped greatly in shaking people out of a blind obedience to religious authority. But they required much more shaking yet.

One of the men who started criticising the Church rather freely was Wycliffe, an Englishman. He was a clergyman and a professor at Oxford. He is famous as the first translator of the Bible into English. He managed to escape the anger of Rome during his life, but in 1415, 31 years after his death, a Church Council ordered that his bones should be dug out and burnt! And this was done!

Although Wycliffe's bones were desecrated and burnt, his views could not easily be stifled, and they spread. They even reached far Bohemia, or Czecho-Slovakia as it is called now, and influenced John Huss, who became the head of the Prague University. He was excommunicated by the Pope for his views, but they could do little to him in his native town as he was very popular. So they played a trick on him. He was given a safe conduct by the Emperor and invited to Constance in Switzerland where a Church Council was sitting. He went. He was told to confess his error. He refused to do so unless he was convinced of it. And then in-spite of their promise and safe conduct, they burnt him alive. This was in 1415 A.C. Huss was a very brave man and he preferred a painful death to saying what he knew to be false. He died a martyr to freedom of conscience and freedom of speech. He is one of the heroes of the Czech people, and his memory is honoured to this day in Czecho-Slovakia.

John Huss's martyrdom was not in vain. It was a spark which lighted a fire of insurrection among his followers in Bohemia. The Pope proclaimed a crusade against them. Crusades were cheap and cost nothing and there were plenty of scoundrels and adventurers

who took advantage of them. These crusaders committed "the most horrible atrocities" (as H. G. Wells tells us) on innocent people. But when the army of the Hussites came singing their battle hymn, the crusaders vanished. They went back rapidly the way they had come. So long as innocent villagers could be killed and plundered the crusaders were full of martial enthusiasm, but on the approach of organised fighters, they fled!

So began the series of revolts and insurrections against autocratic and dogmatic religion, which were to spread all over Europe and divide it into rival camps, and which were to split Christianity into Catholic and Protestant.

71

THE FIGHT AGAINST AUTHORITARIANISM

June 30, 1932

I am afraid you will find my accounts of religious conflict in Europe rather dull. But they are important as they show us how modern Europe developed. They help us to understand Europe. The fight for religious freedom, which we see developing in Europe in the fourteenth century and after, and the fight for political freedom, which will come next, are really two aspects of the same struggle. This is the struggle against authority and authoritarianism. Both the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy represented absolute authority and they tried to crush the spirit of man. The Emperor was there by 'divine right', even more so the Pope, and no one had the right to question this, and not to obey the orders issued to him from above. Obedience was the great virtue. Even the exercise of private judgment was considered sinful. Thus the issue between blind obedience and freedom was quite clear. A great fight was waged in Europe for many centuries for freedom of conscience, and later, political freedom. After many ups and downs and great suffering, a measure of success was obtained. But just when people were congratulating themselves that the goal of freedom had been reached, they found that they were mistaken. There could be no real freedom without economic freedom, and so long as poverty remained. To call a starving man free is but to mock him. So the next step was the fight for economic freedom, and that fight is being waged today all over the world. Only in one country can it be said that economic freedom has been won by the people generally and that is Russia, or rather the Soviet Union.

In India there was no such fight for freedom of conscience because from the earliest days this right never seems to have been denied. People could believe in almost anything they liked and there would be no compulsion. The method of influencing the minds of people was by argument and debate and not by the club and the stake. There may of course have been compulsion or violence used occasionally, but the right of freedom of conscience was admitted in the old Aryan theory. The result of this was not wholly good, strange as this may seem. Being assured of a theoretical freedom, people were not vigilant enough about it, and gradually they got more and more entangled in the rites and ceremonials and superstitions of a degraded religion. They developed a religious ideology, which took them back a long way and made them slaves to religious authority. That authority was not that of a Pope or other individual. It was the authority of the "sacred books" and customs and conventions. So while we talked of freedom of conscience and were proud to have it, we were really far from it, and were chained up by the ideas which had been impressed upon us by the old books and our customs. Authority and authoritianism reigned over us and controlled our minds. The chains which sometimes tie up our bodies are bad enough; but the invisible chains consisting of ideas and prejudices which tie up our minds are far worse. They are of our own making and though often we are not conscious of them they hold us in their terrible grip.

The coming of the Moslems to India as invaders introduced an element of compulsion in religion. The fight was really a political one between conqueror and conquered but it was coloured by the religious element, and there was, at times, religious persecution. But it would be wrong to imagine that Islam stood for such persecution. There is an interesting report of a speech delivered by a Spanish Moslem when he was driven out of Spain, together with the remaining Arabs in 1610. He protested against the Inquisition and said: "Did

our victorious ancestors ever once attempt to extirpate Christianity out of Spain, when it was in their power? Did they not suffer your forefathers to enjoy the free use of their rites at the same time as they wore their chains? ....If there may have been some examples of forced conversions, they are so rare as scarce to deserve mentioning, and only attempted by men who had not the fear of God, and the Prophet, before their eyes, and who in doing so, have acted directly and diametrically contrary to the holy precepts and ordinances of Islam which cannot, without sacrilege, be violated by any who would be held worthy of the honourable epithet of Musalman. You can never produce, among us, any bloodthirsty formal tribunal, on account of different persuasions in points of faith, that any wise approaches your execrable Inquisition. Our arms, it is true, are ever open to receive all who are disposed to embrace our religion; but we are not allowed by our sacred Quran to tyrannize over consciences."

So religious toleration and freedom of conscience, which were so marked features in old Indian life, slipped away from us to some extent, while Europe caught up to us and then went ahead in establishing, after many a struggle, these very principles. To-day, sometimes, there is communal conflict in India and Hindus and Moslems fight each other and kill each other. It is true that this happens only occasionally in some places, and mostly we live in peace and friendship, for our real interests are one. It is a shameful thing for any Hindu or Moslem to fight his brother in the name of religion. We must put an end to it and we will of course do so. But what is important is to get out of that complex ideology of custom, convention and superstition which, under the guise of religion, enchains us.

As in the case of religious toleration, India started off fairly well in regard to political freedom. You will remember our village republics, and how originally the king's powers were supposed to be limited. There was no such thing as the divine right of the kings of Europe.

Because our whole polity was based on village freedom, people were careless as to who was the king. If their local freedom was preserved to them what did it matter to them who was the boss above? But this was a dangerous and foolish idea. Gradually the boss on top increased his powers and encroached on the freedom of the village. And a time arrived when we had absolutely autocratic monarchs and there was no village self-government and no shadow of freedom anywhere from the top to the bottom.

72

THE PASSING OF THE MIDDLE AGES

July 1, 1932

Let us look at Europe again from the 13th to the 15th centuries. There seems to be a tremendous deal of disorder and violence and conflict. The conditions in India were pretty bad also but almost, one would think, that India was peaceful compared to Europe.

The Mongols had brought gunpowder to Europe and firearms were being used now. The kings took advantage of this to crush their rebellious feudal nobles. In this work they got the help of the new merchant classes in the cities. The nobles were in the habit of carrying on little private wars of their own amongst themselves. This weakened them, but it harassed the countryside also. As the king grew in power, he put down this private warfare. In some places there were civil wars between two rival claimants for the crown. Thus in England there was a conflict between two families, the House of York and the House of Lancaster. Each party adopted a rose for its emblem, one a white rose, the other a red one. These wars are therefore called the Wars of the Roses. Large numbers of feudal nobles were killed in these civil wars. The Crusades also killed off many of them. Thus gradually the feudal lords were brought under control. But this did not mean that power was transferred from the nobles to the people. It is the king who grew more powerful. The people remained much the same, except that they were slightly better off by the lessening of private warfare. The king however developed more and more into an all powerful and autocratic monarch. The conflict between the king and the new merchant classes was still to come.

More terrible than war and massacre even, there came the Great Plague to Europe about 1348. It spread all over Europe from Russia and Asia Minor to England; it went to Egypt, north Africa, Central Asia and then spread westward. It was called the Black Death and it killed off people by the million. About a third of the population of England died, and in China and elsewhere the death roll was stupendous. It is surprising that it did not come to India.

This awful calamity reduced the population greatly and often there were not enough people to till the land. Owing to the lack of men the wages of workers tended to rise from their miserable level. But the landlords and property owners controlled the parliaments, and they passed laws to force people to work at the old miserable wage and not to ask for more. Crushed and exploited beyond endurance the peasants and the poor revolted. All over western Europe these peasant revolts took place one after the other. In France there was, what is called, a *jacquerie* in 1358. In England there was Wat Tyler's rebellion in which Tyler was killed in front of the English King in 1381. These revolts were put down, often with much cruelty. But new ideas of equality were slowly spreading. People were asking themselves why they should be poor and starve when others were rich and had an abundance of everything. Why should some be lords and others serfs? Why should some have fine clothes and others not even rags enough to cover themselves. The old idea of submission to authority on which the whole feudal system was based, was breaking down. So the peasants rose again and again, but they were weak and disorganised, and were put down; only to rise again some time later.

England and France were almost continually at war with each other. From early in the 14th century to the middle of the 15th century, there was what is called the Hundred Years' War between them. To the east of France there was Burgundy. This was a powerful State, nominally vassal to the King of France. But

Burgundy was a turbulent and troublesome vassal and the English intrigued with it, as well as with other powers, against France. France was for a while hemmed in on all sides. A good part of western France was for long under English possession, and the King of England began to call himself King of France also. When France was at the lowest ebb of her fortunes and there seemed no hope for her, hope and victory came in the form of a young peasant girl. You know something of Jeanne d'Arc (or Joan of Arc), the Maid of Orleans. She is a heroine of yours. She gave confidence to her disspirited people and inspired them to great endeavour; and under her lead they drove out the English from their country. But for all this the reward she got was a trial and sentence of the Inquisition and the stake. The English got hold of her and they made the Church to condemn her and then in the market place of Rouen they burnt her in 1430. Many years later the Roman Church sought to undo what had been done by reversing the decision condemning her; and long afterwards they made her a saint!

Jeanne spoke of France and of saving her *patrie* from the foreigner. This was a new way of speaking. At that time people were too full of feudal ideas to think of nationalism. So the way Jeanne spoke surprised them and they hardly understood her. We can see the faint beginnings of nationalism in France from the time of Jeanne d'Arc.

Having got the English out of his country, the French King turned to Burgundy, which had given so much trouble. This powerful vassal was finally brought under control and Burgundy became part of France about 1483. The French king now becomes a powerful monarch. He had crushed or brought under control all his feudal nobles. With the absorption of Burgundy into France, France and Germany came face to face. Their frontiers touched each other. But just as France was a strong centralised monarchy, Germany was weak and split up into many States.

England was also trying to conquer Scotland. This was also a long struggle, and Scotland was often on the side of France against England. In 1314 the Scots under Robert Bruce defeated the English at Bannockburn.

Even earlier than this, in the twelfth century, the English began their attempts to conquer Ireland. Seven hundred years ago that was, and since then there has been frequent war and revolt and terror and frightfulness, and yet the question of Ireland has not been settled yet. This little country has refused to submit to an alien domination and, generation after generation, has risen in revolt to proclaim that it will not submit. There can be no settlement of the Irish question, as of the Indian one, except in independence.

In the thirteenth century another small nation of Europe—Switzerland—asserted its right to freedom. It formed part of the Empire and the Austrian ruled it. You must have read the story of William Tell and his son, but probably this is not true. But even more wonderful is the revolt of the Swiss peasants against the great Empire and their refusal to submit to it. Three of the cantons revolted first and formed an "Everlasting League", as they called it, in 1291. Other cantons joined them and in 1499 Switzerland became a free republic. It was a federation of the different cantons, and it was called the Swiss Confederation. Do you remember the bonfires we saw on many a mountain-top in Switzerland on the first of August? That was the national day of the Swiss, the anniversary of the beginning of their revolution, when the bonfire was the signal to rise against the Austrian ruler.

In the east of Europe, what was happening to Constantinople? You will remember that the Latin crusaders captured this city from the Greeks in 1204 A.C. In 1261 these people were driven out by the Greeks who re-established the Eastern Empire again. But another and a greater danger was coming.

When the Mongols had advanced across Asia, fifty

thousand Ottoman Turks had fled before them. These were different from the Seljuq Turks. They looked up to an ancestor, or founder of a dynasty, named Othman or Osman. Hence they were called Ottoman or Osmanli Turks. These Ottomans took refuge under the Seljuqs in west Asia. As the Seljuq Turks weakened, the Ottomans seem to have grown in power. They went on spreading. Instead of attacking Constantinople, as many others had done before them, they passed it by and crossed over to Europe in 1353. They spread rapidly and occupied Bulgaria and Serbia and made Adrianople their capital. Thus the Ottoman empire spread on either side of Constantinople, in Asia and Europe. It surrounded Constantinople, but this city remained outside it. But the proud Eastern Roman Empire of a thousand years was reduced to just this city and practically nothing more. Although the Turk was rapidly swallowing up the Eastern Empire, there appeared to have been friendly relations between the Sultans and the Emperors, and they married into each other's families. Ultimately in 1453 Constantinople fell to the Turks. We shall now refer to the Ottoman Turks only. The Seljuqs have dropped out of the picture.

The fall of Constantinople, though long expected, was a great event which shook Europe. It meant the final end of the thousand-year old Greek Eastern Empire. It meant another Moslem invasion of Europe. The Turks went on spreading and sometimes it almost seemed that they would conquer Europe, but they were checked at the gates of Vienna.

The great cathedral of Saint Sophia, which had been built by the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century, was turned into a mosque, Aya Sufiya it was called, and there was some plundering of its treasures. Europe was excited about this, but it could do nothing. As a matter of fact, however, the Turkish Sultans were very tolerant of the Orthodox Greek Church, and after the capture of Constantinople, Sultan Mohammad II actually proclaimed himself the protector of the Greek Church. A

later Sultan, who is known as Suleiman the Magnificent, considered himself the representative of the Eastern Emperors and took the title of Cæsar. Such is the power of ancient tradition.

The Ottoman Turks do not seem to have been very unwelcome to the Greeks of Constantinople. They saw that the old empire was collapsing. They preferred the Turks to the Pope and the western Christians. Their experience of the Latin crusaders had been bad. It is said that during the last siege of Constantinople in 1453 a Byzantine nobleman said: "Better the turban of the Prophet than the tiara of the Pope."

The Turks built up a peculiar corps, called the Janissaries. They took little Christian children, as a kind of tribute from the Christians, and gave them special training. It was cruel to separate young boys from their parents, but these boys had some advantages also as they were well trained and became a kind of military aristocracy. This corps of Janissaries became a pillar of the Ottoman Sultans. The word Janissary comes from *Jan* (life) *nisar* (sacrifice)—one who sacrifices his life.

In a similar way in Egypt a corps of "Mamelukes," corresponding to the Janissaries, was formed. This became all powerful and even supplied the Sultans to Egypt.

The Ottoman Sultans by taking Constantinople, seem to have inherited many of the evil habits of luxury and corruption from their predecessors, the Byzantine emperors. The whole degraded imperial system of the Byzantines enveloped them and gradually sapped their strength. But for some time they were strong and Christian Europe was in fear of them. They conquered Egypt and took the title of Khalif from the weak and powerless representative of the Abbasides who then possessed it. From that time onwards the Ottoman Sultans called themselves the Khalifs till eight years ago when Mustafa Kamal Pasha put an end to it by abolishing both the Sultanate and the Khalifate.

The date of the fall of Constantinople is a great date in history. It is supposed to be the end of one era, and the beginning of another. The Middle Ages are over. The thousand years of the Dark Ages end, and there is a quickening in Europe, and fresh life and energy are visible. This is called the beginning of the Renaissance—the re-birth of learning and art. People seem to wake up, as from a long sleep, and they took back across the centuries to ancient Greece, in the days of her glory, and draw inspiration from her. There is almost a revolt of the mind against the sombre and dismal view of life encouraged by the Church, and the chains that encompassed the human spirit. The old Grecian love of beauty appears, and Europe blossoms out with fine works of painting and sculpture and architecture.

All this of course was not caused suddenly by the fall of Constantinople. It would be absurd to think so. The capture of the city by the Turks did just a little to speed up the change, as it resulted in large numbers of learned men and scholars leaving it and going west. They brought with them to Italy the treasures of Greek literature just when the west was in a mood to appreciate them. In this sense the fall of the city helped slightly in launching the Renaissance.

But this was only a petty reason for the great change. The old Greek literature and thought was not a new thing in Italy or the west of the Middle Ages. In the universities people studied it still and learned men knew of it. But it was confined to a few, and because it did not fit in with the prevailing view of life, it did not spread. Slowly the ground was prepared for a new view of life by the beginnings of doubt in the minds of the people. They were dissatisfied with things as they were and searched for something which might satisfy them more. When they were in this state of doubt and expectancy their minds discovered the old pagan philosophy of Greece, and they drank deep of her literature. This seemed to them just the thing they sought, and the discovery filled them with enthusiasm.

The Renaissance first began in Italy. Later it appeared in France, England and elsewhere. It was not just a re-discovery of Greek thought and literature. It was something far bigger and greater. It was the outward manifestation of the process that had been going on under the surface in Europe for a long time. This ferment was to break out in many ways. The Renaissance was one of them.

73

THE DISCOVERY OF THE SEA ROUTES

July 3, 1932

We have now reached the stage in Europe when the medieval world begins to break up and give place to a new order. There is discontent and dissatisfaction against existing conditions, and this feeling is the parent of change and progress. All the classes that were exploited by the feudal system and the religious system were discontented. We have seen that peasant revolts, or *jacqueries*, as they are called in French (from Jacques, a peasant name), were taking place. But the peasants were still very backward and weak and, in spite of their revolts, could gain little. Their day was yet to come. The real conflict was between the old feudal class and the new wide awake middle class, which was growing in power. The feudal system meant that wealth was based on land, was in fact land. But now a new kind of wealth was being accumulated, which was not from land. This was from manufactures and trade and the new middle class or bourgeoisie profited by this, and this gave them power. This conflict was already an old one. What we now see is a change in the relative positions of the two parties. The feudal system, though still continuing, is on the defensive. The bourgeoisie, confident of their new strength, takes up the offensive. The struggle goes on through hundreds of years, ever more and more in favour of the bourgeoisie. It varies in different countries of Europe. In eastern Europe, there is little of the struggle. It is in the west that the bourgeoisie first comes into prominence.

The breaking down of the old barriers meant an advance in many directions, in science, in art, in litera-

ture, in architecture, in new discoveries. That is always so when the human spirit breaks its bonds; it expands and spreads out. Even so, when freedom comes to our country, will our people and our genius expand and spread out in all directions.

As the hold of the Church relaxes and grows weaker, people spend less money on cathedrals and churches. Beautiful buildings grow up in many places but they are town halls and the like. The Gothic style also retires, and a new one develops.

Just about this time when western Europe was full of a new energy came the lure of gold from the east. Stories of Marco Polo and other travellers who had been to India and China excited the imagination of Europe, and this stimulus of untold wealth in the east drew many to the sea. Just then came the fall of Constantinople. The Turks controlled the land and the sea routes to the east and they did not encourage trade much. The big merchants and traders chafed at this; the new class of adventurers, who wanted to get at the gold of the east, were also annoyed. So they tried to find out new ways to reach the golden east.

Every school girl knows now that our earth is round and that it goes round the sun. This is such an obvious thing to all of us. But it was not very obvious in the old days, and those people who ventured to think so and say so got into trouble with the Church. But in spite of the fear of the Church more and more persons began to think that the earth was round. If it was round then it should be possible to reach China and India by going west. So some thought. Others thought of reaching India by going round Africa. You must remember that there was no Suez Canal then and ships could not go from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea. Goods and merchandise used to go overland, probably on the backs of camels, between the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea, and take to fresh ships on the other side. This was not convenient at any time. With Egypt and Syria under the Turks this route became even more

difficult.

But the lure of India's wealth continued to excite and draw people. Spain and Portugal take the lead in the voyages of exploration. Spain was just then driving out the last of the Moors or Saracens from Granada. The marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile had united Christian Spain and in 1492, nearly fifty years after the Turks took Constantinople on the other side of Europe, Granada, of the Arabs, fell. Spain immediately became a great Christian power in Europe.

The Portuguese tried to go east; the Spaniards to the west. The first great advance was the discovery by the Portuguese in 1445 of Cape Verde. This cape is the western most point of Africa. Look at the map of Africa. You will see that as one sails down from Europe towards this cape, one has to go south-west. At Cape Verde one goes round the corner and begins going south-east. The discovery of this cape was a very hopeful sign for it made people believe that they would be able to go round Africa towards India.

It took another forty years, however, before Africa was rounded. In 1486 Batholomew Diaz, also a Portuguese, went round the southern tip of Africa, that is, what is called the Cape of Good Hope. Within a few years yet another Portuguese, Vasco de Gama, took advantage of this discovery and came to India, *via* the Cape of Good Hope. Vasco de Gama reached Calicut on the Malabar Coast in 1498.

So the Portuguese won in the race to reach India. But meanwhile great things were happening on the other side of the world and Spain was to profit by them. Christopher Columbus had reached the American world in 1492. Columbus was a poor Genoese and, believing that the world was round, he wanted to go to Japan and India by sailing west. He did not think that the journey would be nearly as long as it turned out to be. He went about from court to court trying to induce some prince to help him in his voyage of exploration. At last, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain agreed to do so, and

Columbus started with three little ships and eighty-eight men. It was a brave and adventurous voyage into the unknown, for no one knew what lay ahead. But Columbus had faith and his faith was justified. After sixty-nine days of sailing they reached land. Columbus thought this was India. It was as a matter of fact one of the West Indies. Columbus never reached the American continent and, to the end of his days, he believed that he had reached Asia. This strange mistake of his has persisted to this day. These Islands are still called the West Indies, and the original inhabitants of America are called Indians or Red Indians even now.

Columbus came back and went again next year with many more ships. The discovery of the new route to India, as it was thought, excited Europe very much. It was soon after this that Vasco de Gama hurried with his eastern voyage and reached Calicut. As the news of fresh discoveries came from east and west, the excitement in Europe grew. The two rivals for dominion over these new lands were Portugal and Spain. The Pope then appeared on the scene and to prevent any conflict between Spaniards and Portuguese, he decided to be generous at other people's expense. In 1493 he issued a Bull—the Papal announcements or edicts are for some reason called Bulls—called the Bull of Demarcation. He drew an imaginary line from north to south a hundred leagues west of the Azores, and declared that Portugal was to have all the non-Christian lands to the east of this line and Spain the lands to the west of the line. A magnificent gift it was of nearly the whole world, minus Europe, and it cost the Pope nothing to make it! The Azores are islands in the Atlantic Ocean and a line drawn a hundred leagues, that is about three hundred miles, to the west of them, would leave the whole of north America and most of south America to the west. Thus, practically, the Pope made a present of the Americas to Spain, and of India, China, Japan and other Eastern countries, as well the whole of Africa, to Portugal!

The Portuguese set about taking possession of this vast dominion. This was not so easy. But they made some progress and continued to go east. They reached Goa in 1510; Malacca in the Malay Peninsula in 1511; Java soon after; and China in 1576. This does not mean that they took possession of these places. They just got some footings in a few places. About their future career in the east, we shall have to discuss in a subsequent letter.

Among the Portuguese in the east was a man called Ferdinand Magellan. But he fell out with his Portuguese masters and, returning to Europe, became a Spanish subject. Having been to India and the eastern islands by the eastern route, *via* the Cape of Good Hope, he now wanted to go there by the western route *via* America. Probably he knew that the land discovered by Columbus was far from being Asia. Indeed in 1573 a Spaniard named Balboa had crossed the mountains of Panama in Central America and had reached the Pacific Ocean. For some reason or other he called this the South Sea, and standing on the shore of it, he claimed the new sea and all lands washed by it as possessions of his master, the King of Spain!

In 1519 Magellan started on his western voyage, which was going to be the greatest voyage of them all. He had five ships and two hundred and seventy men. He crossed the Atlantic to South America and continued going south till he reached the end of the continent. He had lost one ship by ship-wreck and another had deserted; three ships remained. With these he crossed the narrow strait between the South American continent and an island, and came out into the open sea on the other side. This was the Pacific Ocean, so called by Magellan because it was very peaceful compared to the Atlantic. It had taken him just fourteen months to reach the Pacific. The strait he passed through is still known after him—the Strait of Magellan.

Magellan then bravely continued north and then north-west across the unknown sea. This was the most

terrible part of the voyage. No one knew that it would take so long. For nearly four months, one hundred and eight days to be exact, they were in mid-ocean with little to eat or drink. At last, after great privation, they reached the Philippine Islands. The people they met there were friendly to them and gave them food and exchanged gifts. But the Spaniards were offensive and over-bearing. Magellan took part in some petty war between two chieftains and was killed. Many other Spaniards were killed by the people of the island because of their over bearing attitude.

The Spaniards were looking for the Spice Islands, where the precious spices came from. They went on in search for them. Another ship had to be given up and burnt; only two remained. It was decided that one of these should go back to Spain *via* the Pacific, and the other to go *via* the Cape of Good Hope. The former ship did not go far as it was captured by the Portuguese. But the other one, named the "Vittoria", crept round Africa and reached Seville in Spain with 18 men in 1522, just three years after it had sailed. It had gone round the world and it was the first ship to do so.

I have written at some length about the voyage of the "Vittoria" because it was a wonderful voyage. We cross the seas now in every comfort and take long journeys on big ships. But think of these early voyagers, who faced all manner of danger and peril, and plunging into the unknown, discovered the sea routes for those who came after them. The Spaniards and Portuguese of those days were proud and over-bearing and cruel people; but they were wonderfully brave and full of the spirit of adventure.

While Magellan was going round the world, Cortés was entering the city of Mexico and conquering the Aztec Empire for the Spanish King. I have already told you something of this and of the Maya civilization of America. Cortés reached Mexico in 1519. Pizarro reached the Inca Empire (where Peru is now) in South America in 1530. By courage and audacity, and trea-

chery and cruelty, and taking advantage of internal dissensions of the people, Cortés and Pizarro succeeded in putting an end to two old empires. But both of these empires were out of date and, in some ways, very primitive. So they fall down, like a pack of cards, at the first push.

Where the great explorers and discoverers had gone, hordes of adventurers followed. They were eager for loot and plunder. Spanish America especially suffered from this crowd and even Columbus was treated very badly by them. At the same time gold and silver flowed unceasingly to Spain from Peru and Mexico. Enormous quantities of these precious metals came, dazzling Europe, and making Spain, the dominating power of Europe. This gold and silver spread to other countries of Europe, and thus there was an abundant supply of money to buy the products of the East.

The success of Portugal and Spain naturally fired the imaginations of the people of other countries, especially of France and England and Holland and the north German towns. They tried hard at first to find a passage to Asia and America by a northern route, north of Norway to the east, and *via* Greenland to the west. But they failed in this and then took to the well-known routes.

What a wonderful time this must have been, when the world seemed to be opening out and showing her treasures and marvels! New discoveries came one after another, oceans and new continents, and wealth beyond measure, just waiting for the magic call—'open sesame'. The very air must have breathed of the magic of these adventures.

The world is a narrower place now and there is little to discover in it. So it seems. But that is not so, for science has opened up tremendous new vistas which wait to be explored, and of adventure there is no lack. Especially in India to-day!

74

THE BREAK-UP OF THE MONGOL EMPIRES

July 9, 1932

I have not written to you for several days. I was willing and desirous enough of doing so; not so the little finger of my right hand. This little thing has developed a will of its own and does not seem to approve of too much writing. As I was writing to you my last letter, nearly a week ago, it began to non-co-operate with the rest of my hand. I had considerable difficulty in finishing the letter. It was so wayward and obstinate that I decided to give in to its whim and stop writing for a while. I have given it rest and now I begin again. For the moment it is behaving, but I fear it is going to give me some trouble in future.

I have written to you of the passing of the Middle Ages and of the awakening of the new spirit in Europe, and a new energy which found outlets in many ways. Europe seems to be bustling with activity and creative effort. Her people, after being couped up in their little countries for centuries, burst out and cross the wide oceans and go to the uttermost corners of the world. They go forth as conquerors, confident in their own strength; and this very confidence gives them courage and makes them perform wonderful deeds.

But you must have wondered how this sudden change took place. In the middle of the thirteenth century the Mongols dominated Asia and Europe. Eastern Europe was in their possession; western Europe trembled before these great and seemingly invincible warriors. What were the kings and emperors of Europe before even a general of the Great Khan?

Two hundred years later, the Ottoman Turks were

in possession of the Imperial City of Constantinople and a good bit of south-eastern Europe. After eight hundred years of fighting between Moslem and Christian, the great prize, which had lured the Arabs and the Seljuqs, had fallen in the hands of the Ottomans. Not content with this the Ottoman Sultans looked with hungry eyes to the west, even at Rome itself. They threatened the German (Holy Roman) Empire and Italy. They conquered Hungary and reached to the walls of Vienna and the frontiers of Italy. In the east they added Baghdad to their dominions; in the south, Egypt. In the middle of the sixteenth century Sultan Suleiman, called the magnificent, ruled over this great Turkish Empire. Even on the seas his fleets were supreme.

How then did this change occur? How did Europe get rid of the Mongol menace? How did it survive the Turkish danger? and not only survive it, but become aggressive itself and a menace to others?

The Mongols did not threaten Europe for long. They went away of their own accord to elect a new Khan and they did not come back. Western Europe was too far from their homelands in Mongolia. Perhaps also it did not attract them because it was woody country and they were used to the wide open plains and steppes. In any event western Europe saved itself from the Mongols not by any valour of its own but by the indifference and the preoccupations of the Mongols. In eastern Europe they remained for some time longer, till the Mongol power gradually broke up.

I have already told you that the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1452 is supposed to be a turning point in European history. It marks, for the sake of convenience, the passing of the middle ages and the coming of the new spirit, the Renaissance, which flowered out in a variety of ways. Thus, curiously, just when Europe was threatened by the Turks, and the Turks seemed to have a good chance of success, Europe found her feet and developed strength. The Turks went on advancing in western Europe for a while; and while they advanced,

European explorers were discovering new countries and seas and rounding the globe. Under Suleiman the magnificent, who reigned from 1520 to 1566, the Turkish Empire spread from Vienna to Baghdad and Cairo. But there was no advance after that. The Turks were succumbing to the old weakening and corrupting traditions of Constantinople of the Greeks. As Europe increased in power, the Turks lost their old energy and became weaker.

In the course of our wanderings through past ages we have seen many invasions of Europe by Asia. There were some invasions of Asia by Europe, but they were of little moment. Alexander went across Asia to India without any great result. The Romans never went beyond Mespot. Europe, on the other hand, was repeatedly overrun by Asiatic tribes from the earliest times. Of these Asiatic invasions the Ottoman invasion of Europe was the last. Gradually we find the roles are reversed, and Europe takes up the aggressive. This change might be said to occur about the middle of the sixteenth century. America, newly discovered, goes down quickly before Europe. Asia is a more difficult problem. For two hundred years Europeans try to find footholds in various parts of the Asiatic continent, and by the middle of the eighteenth century they begin to dominate parts of Asia. It is well to remember this as some people, ignorant of history, imagine that Europe has always bossed it over Asia. This new role of Europe is quite a recent one, as we shall see, and already the scene is changing and the role appears out of date. New ideas are astir in all the countries of the East, and powerful movements aiming at freedom are challenging and shaking the domination of Europe. Wider and deeper even than these nationalistic ideas are the new social ideas of equality which want to put an end to all imperialism and exploitation. There should be no question in future of Europe dominating Asia or Asia dominating Europe, or any country exploiting another.

This has been a long preface. We come back to

the Mongols. Let us follow their fortunes for a while and see what happened to them. You will remember that Kublai Khan was the last Great Khan. After his death in 1292 the vast empire, which stretched right across Asia from Korea to Poland and Hungary in Europe, split up into five empires. Each of these five empires was in reality a very big empire. In a previous letter (No. 68) I have given you the names of these five.

The principal one was the Empire of China, including Manchuria, Mongolia, Tibet, Korea, Annam, Tongking and part of Burma. The Yuan dynasty, descendants of Kublai, succeeded to this; but not for long. Very soon bits of it dropped off in the south and as I have told you, in 1368, just seventy-six years after Kublai's death, his dynasty fell and the Mongols were driven away.

In the far west was the Empire of the Golden Horde—what a fascinating name these people had! The Russian nobles paid tribute to it for nearly two hundred years after Kublai's death. At the end of this period (1480) the Empire was weakening a little and the Grand Duke of Moscow, who had managed to become the chief Russian noble, refused to pay tribute. This Grand Duke is called Ivan the Great. In the north of Russia there was the old republic of Novgorod, which was controlled by merchants and traders. Ivan defeated this republic and added it to his dukedom. Constantinople meanwhile had fallen to the Turks and the family of the old emperors driven out. Ivan married a girl of this old imperial family and thus claimed to be in this imperial line and an heir to old Byzantium. The Russian Empire, which was finally ended by the revolutions of 1917, began in this way under Ivan the Great. His grandson, who was very cruel and was therefore called Ivan the Terrible, gave himself the title of Tsar, which was the equivalent of Cæsar or emperor.

Thus the Mongols finally retired from Europe. We need not trouble ourselves much about the remains of

the Golden Horde or the other Mongol Empires of Central Asia. Besides I do not know much about them. But one man claims our attention.

This man was Timur, who wanted to be a second Chengiz Khan. He claimed to be descended from Chengiz, but he was really a Turk. He was lame and is therefore called Timur-i-lang or Timur the Lame or Tamurlane. He succeeded his father and became ruler of Samarkand in 1369. Soon after, he started on his career of conquest and cruelty. He was a great general but he was a complete savage. The Mongols of Central Asia had meanwhile become Muslims and Timur himself was a Muslim. But the fact that he was dealing with Muslims did not soften him in the least. Wherever he went he spread desolation and pestilence and utter misery. His chief pleasure was the erection of enormous pyramids of skulls. From Delhi in the east to Asia Minor in the west he caused to be massacred hundreds of thousands of persons and had their skulls arranged in the form of pyramids!

Chengiz Khan and his Mongols were cruel and destructive, but they were like others of their time. But Timur was much worse. He stands apart for wanton and fiendish cruelty. In one place, it is said, he erected a tower of 2000 live men and covered them up with brick and mortar!

The wealth of India attracted this savage. He had some difficulty in inducing his generals and nobles to agree to his proposal to invade India. There was a great council in Samarkand and the nobles objected to going to India because of the great heat there. Ultimately Timur promised that he would not stay in India. He would just plunder and destroy and return. He kept his word.

Northern India was then, you will remember, under Muslim rule. There was a Sultan at Delhi. But this Muslim State was weak and constant warfare with the Mongols on the frontiers had broken its backbone. So when Timur came with an army of Mongols there was

no great resistance and he went on gaily with his massacres and pyramids. Both Hindus and Muslims were slain. No distinction seems to have been made. The prisoners becoming a burden, he ordered all of them to be killed and a hundred thousand were massacred! At one place, it is said, both the Hindus and Muslims jointly performed the Rajput ceremony of *jauhar*—marched out to die in battle. But why should I go on repeating this story of horror? It was the same all along his route. Famine and disease followed Timur's army. For fifteen days he remained in Delhi and converted that great city into a shambles. He returned to Samarkand, after plundering Kashmir on the way.

Savage as he was, Timur wanted to put up fine buildings in Samarkand and elsewhere in Central Asia. So he collected, as Sultan Mahmud had done long before him, artisans and skilled mechanics and master-builders in India and took them with him. The best of these master-builders and craftsmen he kept in his own imperial service. The others were spread in the chief cities of western Asia. Thus developed a new style of architecture.

After Timur's departure, Delhi was a city of the dead. Famine and pestilence reigned unchecked. There was no ruler or organization or order for two months. There were few inhabitants. Even the man Timur had appointed as his Viceroy in Delhi retired to Multan.

Timur then went west spreading desolation across Persia and Mesopotamia. At Angora he met a great army of the Ottoman Turks in 1402. By brilliant generalship he defeated these Turks. But the sea was too much for him and he could not cross the Bosphorus. So Europe escaped him.

Three years later, in 1405, Timur died, as he was marching towards China. With him collapsed his great empire which covered nearly the whole of western Asia. The Ottomans paid tribute to him, so did Egypt, so did the Golden Horde. But his ability was confined to his generalship, which was remarkable. Some of his

campaigns in the snows of Siberia were extraordinary. But at heart he was a barbarous nomad, and he built up no organization and left behind him no competent men, as Chengiz had done, to carry on the empire. So the Empire of Timur ended with him and left a memory only of massacre and desolation. In Central Asia, of the hordes of adventurers and conquerors who have passed through it, four men are remembered still—Sikandar or Alexander, Sultan Mahmud, Chengiz Khan and Timur.

Timur shook up the Ottoman Turks by his defeat of them. But they recovered soon and, as we know, in another fifty years (1453) they took Constantinople.

We must take leave of Central Asia now. It goes back in the scale of civilization and sinks into obscurity. Nothing of note happens which will demand our attention. Only the memory of old civilizations remain, destroyed by the hand of man. Nature also laid a heavy hand on it and gradually made the climate drier and less habitable.

We must also bid good-bye to the Mongols, except for a branch of them which subsequently came to India and built a great and famous empire here. But the empire of Chengiz Khan and his descendants breaks up, and the Mongols revert to their petty chieftains and their tribal habits.

The little finger shows signs of distress and I must end.

75

INDIA BEGINS TO TACKLE A DIFFICULT PROBLEM

July 12, 1932

I have written to you of Timur and his massacres and pyramids of heads. How horrible and barbarous all this seems! Such a thing could not happen in our civilized age. And yet, do not be so sure. We have only recently seen and heard of what can and does happen even in our own times. The destruction of life and property caused by Chengiz Khan or Timur, great as it was, pales almost into insignificance before the destruction during the Great War of 1914-18. And every Mongol cruelty can be rivalled by modern instances of frightfulness.

Yet it is undoubted that we have progressed in a hundred ways since the days of Chengiz or Timur. Life is not only vastly more complicated but it is richer; and many of the forces of nature have been explored and understood and brought to the use of man. Certainly, the world is more civilized and cultured now. Why then do we relapse back into barbarism during periods of war? Because war itself is a negation and denial of civilization and culture, except in so far as it takes advantage of the civilized brain to invent and use more and more powerful and horrible weapons. With the coming of war most people who are involved in it work themselves up into a terrible state of excitement, forget much that civilization has taught them, forget truth and the graces of life, and begin to resemble their savage ancestors of a few thousand years ago. Is it then surprising that war, whenever waged, is a horrible thing?

What would a stranger to this world of ours say

if he visited us during war time? Suppose he only saw us then and not during peace time. He would only judge by the war and come to the conclusion that we were cruel and relentless savages, occasionally showing courage and sacrifice, but, on the whole, with few redeeming features, and with one master passion—to kill and destroy each other. He would misjudge us and form a distorted view of our world, because he would see only one side of us at a particular, and not very favourable, time.

So also, if we think of the past in terms of wars and massacres only, we shall misjudge it. Unfortunately wars and massacres have a way of attracting a great deal of attention. The day to day life of a people is rather dull. What is the historian to say about it? So the historian swoops down on a war or battle and makes the most of it. Of course we cannot forget or ignore such wars, but we must not attach more importance to them than they deserve. Let us think of the past in terms of the present, and of the people in those days in terms of ourselves. We shall then get a more human view of them, and we shall realise that what really counted was the day to day life and the thoughts of those people, and not the occasional wars. It is well to remember this, as you will find your history books overfull of such wars. Even these letters of mine are apt to stray in that direction. The real reason for this is the difficulty in writing about the day to day life of past times. I do not know enough about it.

Timur, as we have seen, was one of the worst afflictions that befell India. One shudders to think of that trail of horror which he left behind him wherever he went. And yet south India was wholly unaffected by him, so also the east and west and central India. Even the present United Provinces practically escaped him, except for a bit in the north, near Delhi and Meerut. The Punjab, besides Delhi city, was the province that suffered most by Timur's raid. Even in the Punjab the main sufferers lay along the route taken by Timur. The

vast majority of the people of the Punjab carried on their ordinary work without any interruption. So we must be on our guard not to exaggerate the importance of these wars and raids.

Let us look at the India of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Delhi Sultanate shrinks till it vanishes away on Timur's coming. There are a number of large independent States all over India, mostly Muslim; but there is one powerful Hindu State—Vijayanagar—in the south. Islam is no longer a stranger or a new comer in India. It is well established. The fierceness and cruelty of the early Afghan invaders and the Slave Kings has been toned down, and the Muslim Kings are as much Indians as the Hindus. They have no outside connections. Wars take place between different States, but they are political and not religious. Sometimes a Muslim State employs Hindu troops, and a Hindu State Muslim troops. Muslim kings often marry Hindu women. Hindus are often employed as ministers and high officials by the Muslim kings. There is little of the feeling of conqueror and conquered or ruler and ruled. Indeed most of the Muslims, including some of the rulers, are Indians converted to Islam. Many of these become converted in the hope of gaining court favour or economic advantage, and inspite of their change of religion they stick to most of their old customs. Some Muslim rulers adopt forcible methods to bring about conversion, but even this was largely with a political object, as it was thought that the converts would be more loyal subjects. But force does not go far in bringing about conversions. A more effective method is the economic. Non-Muslims are made to pay a poll-tax called the *jizya*, and many of them wishing to escape this become Muslims.

But all this takes place in the cities. The villages are little affected, and the millions of villagers carry on in the old way. It is true that the King's officers interfere more in village life. The powers of the village *panchayats* are less now than they used to be, but still

the *panchayats* continue and are the centre and backbone of village life. Socially and in the matter of religion and custom, the village is almost unchanged. India, as you know, is still a country of hundreds of thousands of villages. The towns and cities sit on the surface, as it were, but the real India has been, and still is, village India. This village India was not much changed by Islam.

Hinduism was shaken up in two ways by the coming of Islam; and, strange to say, both these ways were contrary to each other. On the one side it became conservative; it hardened and retired into a shell in an attempt at protecting itself against the attack on it. Caste became stiffer and more exclusive; the *purdah* and seclusion of women became commoner. On the other hand, there was a kind of internal revolt against caste and too much *puja* and ceremonial. Many efforts were made to reform it.

Of course right through history, from the earliest times, reformers have risen in Hinduism, who have tried to rid it of its abuses. Buddha was the greatest of these. I have also told you of Shankaracharya who lived in the eight century. Three hundred years later, in the eleventh century, there lived in the south, in the Chola empire, another great reformer who was the leader of a rival school of thought to that of Shankara. His name was Ramanuja. Shankara was a Shaivite and a man of intellect. Ramanuja was a Vaishnavite and a man of faith. Ramanuja's influence spread all over India. I have told you how, right through history, India has been culturally united, even though politically it may have been split up into many warring States. Whenever a great man or a great movement arose, it spread all over India regardless of political boundaries.

After Islam had settled down in India, a new type of reformer rose among the Hindus, as well as among the Muslims. He tried to bring the two religions nearer to each other by laying stress on the common features of both and attacking their rites and ceremonials. An

effort was thus made to bring about a synthesis of the two, that is to say a kind of mixture of the two. It was a difficult task as there was much ill feeling and prejudice on both sides. But we shall see that century after century this effort was made. Some even of the Muslim rulers, and notably the great Akbar, tried to bring about this synthesis.

Ramanand was the first well known teacher who preached this synthesis. He preached against caste and ignored it. Among his disciples was a Muslim weaver named Kabir, who became even more famous later on. Ramanand lived in the south in the fourteenth century. Kabir became very popular. His songs in Hindi, as you perhaps know, are very well known now even in remote villages in the north. He was neither Hindu nor Muslim; he was both or something between the two. His followers came from both religions and all castes. There is a story that when he died, his body was covered with a sheet. His Hindu disciples wanted to take it for cremation; his Muslim disciples wanted to bury it. So they argued and quarrelled. But when some one lifted up the sheet they found that the body, for the possession of which they quarrelled, had disappeared. In its place there were some fresh flowers. The story may be quite imaginary; but it is a pretty one.

A little after Kabir there rose another great reformer and religious leader in the north. This was Guru Nanak who was the founder of Sikhism. He was followed, one after the other, by the ten *gurus* of the Sikhs, the last of whom was Guru Govind Singh.

One other name, famous in Indian religious and cultural history, I should like to mention here. This was a Chaitanya, a famous scholar of Bengal, early in the sixteenth century, who suddenly decided that his scholarship was not worth while and left it, and took to the ways of faith. He became a great *bhakta*, who went about singing *bhajans* with his disciples all over Bengal. He founded also a Vaishnavite order and his influence is still great in Bengal.

So much for religious reform and synthesis. In all other departments of life also there was this synthesis going on, sometimes consciously, more often, unconsciously. A new culture, a new architecture, a new language was growing up. But, remember, that all this was far more in the cities than in the villages, and especially in Delhi, the imperial capital, and the other great capitals of States and provinces. At the top the king was more autocratic than ever before. The old Indian rulers had custom and convention to check their autocracy. The new Muslim rulers did not have this even. Although in theory there is far more equality in Islam, and as we have seen, even a slave could become Sultan; still the autocratic and unchecked power of the king increased. What more amazing instance of this can one have than that of the mad Tughluq who took the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad?

The practice of keeping slaves, especially by the Sultans, also increased. A special effort was made to capture these in war. Artisans were specially valued amongst them. The others were enrolled in the Sultan's guard.

What of the great universities of Nalanda and Takshashila or Taxila? They had long ceased to exist but many new university centres of a new type had arisen. 'Tols' they were called, where the old Sanskrit learning was imparted. They were not up to date. They lived in the past and probably kept up a spirit of reaction. Benares has all along been one of the biggest of such centres.

I have spoken above of Kabir's songs in Hindi. Hindi was thus in the fifteenth century already not only a popular but a literary language. Sanskrit had long ceased to be a living language. Even in the days of Kalidas and the Gupta kings, Sanskrit was confined to the learned. The ordinary people talked a Prakrit, a variation of Sanskrit. Slowly the other daughters of Sanskrit developed—Hindi, Bengali, Marathi and Gujrati. Many Muslim writers and poets wrote in Hindi.

A Muslim king of Jaunpur in the fifteenth century had the "Mahabharat" and the "Bhagawad" translated from the Sanskrit into Bengali. The accounts of the Muslim rulers of Bijapur in the south were kept in Marathi. So we find already in the 15th century that these daughter languages of Sanskrit had grown up sufficiently. In the south of course the Dravidian languages—Tamil and Telugu and Malayalam and Kanarese—were much older.

The Muslim Court language was Persian. Most educated people learnt Persian if they had anything to do with the courts or government offices. Thus large numbers of Hindus learnt Persian. Gradually a new language developed in the camps and bazaars, called "Urdu", which means 'camp'. In reality this was not a new language. It was Hindi with a slightly different dress on; there were more of Persian words in it, but otherwise it was Hindi. This Hindi-Urdu language, or as it is sometimes called Hindustani, spread all over northern and central India. It is to-day spoken, with minor variations, by about a hundred and fifty million people and understood by a far greater number. Thus it is, from the point of numbers, one of the major languages of the world.

In architecture, new styles were developed and many noble buildings arose—in Bijapur and Vijayanagar in the South; in Golkonda; in Ahmedabad which was then a great and beautiful city (which it is far from being now!) and in Jaunpur, not far from Allahabad. Do you remember our visit to the old ruins of Golkonda near Hyderabad? We went up the great fortress and saw, spread out beneath us, the old city, with its palaces and markets—all in ruins now.

So, while kings quarrelled and destroyed each other, silent forces in India worked ceaselessly for a synthesis, in order that the people of India may live harmoniously together and devote their energies jointly to progress and betterment. In the course of centuries they achieved considerable success. But before their work was com-

plete there was another upset, and we went back part of the way we had come. Again we have to-day to march the same way and work for a synthesis of all that is good. But this time it must be on surer foundations. It must be based on freedom and social equality, and it must fit in with a better world order. Only then will it endure.

The problem of this synthesis of religion and culture engrossed the better mind of India for many hundreds of years. It was so full of it that political and social freedom was forgotten, and just when Europe shot ahead in a dozen different directions, India remained behind, unprogressing and vegetating.

There was a time, as I have already told you, when India controlled foreign markets because of her progress in chemistry—in the making of dyes—in tempering steel, and for many other reasons. Her ships carried her merchandise to distant places. India had long lost this control at the time of which we are speaking. In the sixteenth century the river begins to flow back to the east. It is a small trickle to begin with. But it was to grow till it became a mighty stream.

76

THE KINGDOMS OF SOUTH INDIA

July 14, 1932

Let us have another look at India and see the shifting panorama of States and empires. Almost it is like a great and unending movie film with silent pictures coming one after the other.

You will remember, perhaps, the mad Sultan Mohammad Tughluq and how he succeeded in breaking up the Delhi Empire. The great provinces in the south fell away and new States arose there, chief among these being the Hindu State of Vijayanagar and the Muslim State of Kulbarga. To the east the province of Gaur, which included Bengal and Behar, became independent under a Muslim ruler.

Mohammad's successor was his nephew Firoz Shah. He was saner than his uncle and more humane. But there was still intolerance. Firoz was an efficient ruler and he introduced many reforms in his administration. He could not recover the lost provinces in the south or east, but he managed to check the process of the breaking up of the empire. He was particularly fond of building new cities and palaces and mosques and planning gardens. Firozabad, near Delhi, and Jaunpur, not far from Allahabad, were founded by him. He also built a great canal on the Jumna, and repaired many of the old buildings which were falling to pieces. He was quite proud of this work of his and left a long list of the new buildings he had put up and the old ones he had repaired.

Firoz Shah's mother was a Rajput woman, Bibi Naila, the daughter of a big chief. There is a story that she was at first refused in marriage to Firoz's father.

Thereupon there was war and Naila's country was attacked and desolated. Bibi Naila on learning of the suffering of her people on her account was much upset and decided to put an end to it and save her people by surrendering herself to the father of Firoz Shah. Thus Firoz Shah had Rajput blood. You will find that such intermarriages between Muslim rulers and Rajput women became frequent, and this must have helped in developing a sentiment of a common nationality.

Firoz Shah died in 1388 after a long reign of 37 years. Immediately the fabric of the Delhi Empire which he had held together fell to pieces. There was no central government and petty rulers bossed it everywhere. It was during this period of disorder and weakness that Timur came down from the north, just ten years after Firoz Shah's death. He nearly killed Delhi. Slowly the city recovered and fifty years later, again it became the seat of a central government with a Sultan at the head. But it was a little State and could not compare with the great kingdoms of the south and west and east India. The Sultans were Afghans. They were a poor lot and even their own Afghan nobles got fed up with them ultimately, and, in sheer disgust, invited a foreigner to come and rule over them. This foreigner was Babar, a Mongol, or Mughal as we shall call them now, after they settle down in India. He was directly descended from Timur and his mother was a descendant of Chengiz Khan. He was at the time ruler of Kabul. He gladly accepted the invitation to come to India; indeed he would have probably come even without the invitation! On the plains of Panipat, near Delhi, in 1526, Babar won the empire of Hindustan. A great empire rose again, known as the Mughal Empire of India, and Delhi again attained prominence and became the seat of this empire. But before we consider this we must look at the rest of India and see what was happening then during these one hundred and fifty years of the decline of Delhi.

Quite a number of States, little and great, existed in

India during this period. In Jaunpur, newly founded, there was a small Muslim State ruled by the Sharqi Kings. It was not big and powerful, and politically it was not important. But for nearly a hundred years in the 15th century it was a great seat of culture and toleration in religion. The Muslim colleges of Jaunpur spread these ideas of toleration, and one of the rulers even tried to bring about that synthesis between Hindus and Muslims of which I wrote to you in my last letter. Art and fine building were encouraged, and so were the growing languages of the country, like Hindi and Bengali. In the midst of a great deal of intolerance, the little and shortlived state of Jaunpur stands out, a haven of scholarship and culture and toleration.

To the east, coming almost right up to Allahabad was the great state of Gaur which included Behar and Bengal. The city of Gaur was a seaport communicating by sea with the coastal towns of India. In Central India, west of Allahabad and almost up to Gujrat, was Malwa with its capital at Mandu, which was a city and fortress combined. Here in Mandu many beautiful and splendid buildings arose, and their ruins attract visitors still.

North-west of Malwa was Rajputana with many Rajput States, and especially Chittor. There was frequent fighting between Chittor and Malwa and Gujrat. Chittor was small compared to these two powerful States, but the Rajputs have always been brave fighters. Sometimes, in spite of their small numbers, they won. Such a victory by the Rana of Chittor over Malwa was celebrated by his building a fine tower of victory—the *Jaya Stambha*—in Chittor. The Sultan of Mandu, not to be outdone, built a high tower at Mandu. The Chittor tower still remains; the Mandu one has vanished.

To the west of Malwa lay Gujrat. Here was established a powerful kingdom, and its capital, Ahmedabad, founded by Sultan Ahmad Shah, became a great city of nearly a million inhabitants. Beautiful buildings arose

in this city and, it is said, that for three hundred years, from the 15th to the 18th centuries, Ahmedabad was one of the finest cities in the world. It is curious to find that the great Jami Masjid of the city resembles the Jaina temple built at Ranpur by the Rana of Chittor, which was built about the same time. This shows how the old Indian architects were being affected by the new ideas, and were producing a new architecture. Here again you see the synthesis in the field of art of which I have already written. Even now there are many of these fine old buildings in Ahmedabad with wonderful carvings in stone, but the new industrial city that has grown up around them is a horror and one feels like passing by it with eyes averted.

It was about this time that the Portuguese reached India. You will remember that Vasco de Gama was the first to come round the Cape of Good Hope. He reached Calicut in the south in 1498. Of course many Europeans had previously visited India. But they came as traders or just simply as visitors. The Portuguese now came with different ideas. They were full of pride and self-confidence; they had the Pope's gift of the eastern world. They came with the intention of conquest. They were small in numbers to begin with, but more and more ships came round and some coast towns were seized, notably Goa. The Portuguese never did much in India. They never got inland. But they were the first of the Europeans to come by sea to attack India. They were followed much later by the French and English. Thus the opening of the sea routes showed the weakness of India by sea. The old powers of South India had dwindled and their attention was diverted to dangers from the land side.

The Gujrat Sultans fought the Portuguese even by sea. They allied themselves with the Ottoman Turks and defeated a Portuguese fleet, but the Portuguese won later and controlled the sea. Just then the fear of the Mughals at Delhi made the Gujrat Sultans seek peace with the Portuguese, but the latter played them false.

In South India there had arisen early in the 14th century two great kingdoms: Gulbarga, also called the Bahmani kingdom, and, to the south of this, Vijayanagar. The Bahmani kingdom spread all over the Maharashtra area nd partly over the Karnataka. It lasted for over a hundred and fifty years, but its record is an ignoble one. There is intolerance and violence and murder, and luxury of the Sultan and nobles and extreme misery of the people. Early in the 16th century the Bahmani kingdom collapsed through sheer ineptitude and was split up into five sultanates—Bijapur, Ahmednagar, Golkonda, Bidar and Berar. The State of Vijayanagar had meantime carried on for nearly two hundred years and was still flourishing. Between these six States there were frequent wars, each attempting to gain the mastery of the south. There were all manner of combinations between them and these were always changing. Sometimes a Muslim State fought the Hindu State; sometimes a Muslim and Hindu State jointly fought another Muslim. The struggles were purely political, and whenever any one State seemed to become too powerful, the others allied themselves against it. Ultimately Vijayanagar's strength and wealth induced the Muslim States to combine against it, and in 1565, at the battle of Talikota, they succeeded in crushing it completely. The Empire of Vijayanagar ended after two and a half centuries, and the great and splendid city was utterly destroyed.

The victorious allies fell out amongst themselves soon after and fought each other, and before long the shadow of the Mughal Empire of Delhi fell on them all. Another of their troubles were the Portuguese who captured Goa in 1510. This was in Bijapur State. In spite of every effort to dislodge them the Portuguese stuck to Goa, and their leader Albuquerque, who had the fine title of Viceroy of the East, indulged in disgusting cruelties. The Portuguese carried out a massacre of the people and did not spare even women and children. Ever since then, to this day, the Portuguese have remained in Goa.

Beautiful buildings were made in these southern States, specially in Vijayanagar and Golkonda and Bijapur. Golkonda is in ruins now; Bijapur still has many of these fine buildings; Vijayanagar was reduced to dust and is no more. The city of Hyderabad was founded near Golkonda about this time. The builders and craftsmen of the south are said to have gone later to the north and helped in the building of the Taj Mahal at Agra.

Inspite of general toleration of each other's religions, there were occasional bursts of bigotry and intolerance. The wars were often accompanied by frightful slaughters and destruction. Yet it is interesting to remember that the Muslim State of Bijapur had Hindu cavalry, and the Hindu state of Vijayanagar had some Muslim troops. There appears to have been a fairly high degree of civilization, but it was a rich man's show, and the man in the field was out of it. He was poor and yet, as always happens, he bore the burden of the great luxury of the rich.

77

VIJAYANAGAR

July 15, 1932

Of all the kingdoms of the South we discussed in our last letter, Vijayanagar has the longest history. It so happened that many foreign visitors came to it and left accounts of the State and the city. There was an Italian, Nicolo Conti, who came in 1420; and Abdur-Razzaq of Herat, who came from the court of the Great Khan in Central Asia in 1443; and Paes, a Portuguese, who visited the city in 1522; and many others. There is also a history of India which deals with the South Indian States, and especially Bijapur. This was written in Persian by Ferishta in Akbar's time, not long after the period we are considering. Contemporary histories are often very partial and exaggerated, but they are of great help. There are hardly any of these known to us for the pre-Muslim periods, with the exception of the *Rāja Taranginī* of Kashmir. Ferishta's history was thus a great innovation. Others followed him.

The descriptions of so many foreign visitors of Vijayanagar give us a good and impartial picture of the city. They tell us more than the accounts of the wretched wars which were frequently taking place. I shall therefore tell you something of what these people say.

Vijayanagar was founded about 1336. It was situated in what is known as the Karnataka area of South India. Being a Hindu State, it naturally attracted large numbers of refugees from the Muslim States in the South. It grew rapidly. Within a few years the State dominated the South, and the capital city attracted attention by its wealth and beauty. Vijayanagar became

the dominant power in the Dekhan.

Ferishta tells us of its great wealth and describes the capital in 1406 when a Muslim Bahmani king from Gulbarga went there to marry a princess of Vijayanagar. He says that for six miles the road was spread with cloth of gold and velvet and similar rich stuffs. What terrible and scandalous waste of money!

In 1420 came the Italian Nicolo Conti and he tells us that the circumference of the city was sixty miles. This area was so vast as there were numerous gardens. Conti was of opinion that the ruler of Vijayanagar, or Raya as he was called, was the most powerful ruler in India at the time.

Then comes Abdur-Razzaq from Central Asia. On his way to Vijayanagar, near Mangalore, he saw a wonderful temple made of pure molten brass. It was fifteen feet high, and thirty feet by thirty at its base. Further up, at Belur, he was still more amazed at another temple. Indeed, he does not attempt to describe it as he fears that if he did so, he would be "charged with exaggeration"! Then he reached the city of Vijayanagar and he goes into ecstasies over this. He says: "The city is such that eye has not seen nor ear heard of any place resembling it upon the whole earth." He describes the many bazaars—"at the head of each bazaar there is a lofty arcade and magnificent gallery, but the palace of the King is loftier than all of them." "The bazaars are very long and broad ...... Sweet scented flowers are always procurable fresh in that city and they are considered as even necessary sustenance, seeing that without them they could not exist. The tradesmen of each separate guild or craft have their shops close to one another. The jewellers sell their rubies and pearls and diamonds and emeralds openly in the bazaar." Abdur-Razzaq goes on to describe that "in this charming area, in which the palace of the King is contained, there are many rivulets and streams flowing through channels of cut stone, polished and even .... The country is so well populated that it is impossible in a reasonable

space to convey an idea of it." And so he goes on, this visitor from Central Asia in the middle of the fifteenth century, waxing eloquent over the glories of Vijayanagar.

It may be thought that Abdur-Razzaq was not acquainted with many big cities and so he was almost overcome when he saw Vijayanagar. Our next visitor, however, was a well travelled man. He was Paes, the Portuguese, and he came in 1522, just about the time when the Renaissance was influencing Italy and beautiful buildings were rising up in the Italian cities. Paes apparently knew these Italian cities and his testimony is thus very valuable. The city of Vijayanagar, he says, is as "large as Rome and very beautiful to the sight." He describes at length the wonders of the city, and the charms of its innumerable lakes and water-ways and fruit gardens. It is, he says, "the best provided city in the world . . . . . . for the state of the city is not like that of other cities, which often fail of supplies and provisions, for in this everything abounds." One of the rooms he saw in the palace was "all of ivory, as well the chamber as the walls from top to bottom, and the pillars of the cross-timbers at the top had roses and flowers of lotuses all of ivory, and all well executed, so that there could not be better—it is so rich and beautiful that you would hardly find anywhere another such."

Paes also describes the ruler of Vijayanagar at the time of his visit. He was one of the great rulers of South Indian history and his reputation as a great warrior and as one who was chivalrous to his enemies, as a patron of literature, and a popular and generous king, still survives in the South. His name was Krishna Deva Raya. He reigned for twenty years from 1509 to 1529. Paes tells of his height and figure and even complexion, which he says was fair. "He is the most feared and perfect king that could possibly be, cheerful of disposition and very merry; he is one that seeks to honour foreigners, and receives them kindly, asking about all their affairs whatever their condition may be." Giving

the King's many titles, Paes adds: "but it seems that he has in fact nothing compared to what a man like him ought to have, so gallant and perfect is he in all things."

High praise indeed! The Empire of Vijayanagar at this time spread all over the south and the east coast. It included Mysore, Travancore and the whole of the present Madras presidency.

One thing else I might mention. Great irrigation works were erected about 1400 A.C. to bring good water to the city. A whole river was dammed up and a big reservoir was made. From this the water went to the city, in an aqueduct, fifteen miles in length, often cut out of the solid rock.

Such was Vijayanagar. It was proud of its wealth and beauty and over-confident of its strength. No one thought that the end of the city and empire was near. Only forty-three years after the visit of Paes, danger suddenly loomed up. The other States of the Dekhan, jealous of Vijayanagar, formed a league against it and determined to destroy it. Even then Vijayanagar felt foolishly confident. The end came soon and it was terrible in its completeness.

As I have told you, Vijayanagar was defeated by this league of States in 1565. There was terrible slaughter and the sack of the great city followed soon after. All the beautiful buildings and temples and palaces were destroyed. The exquisite carvings and sculptures were smashed, and huge bonfires were lit to burn up everything that could be burnt. Destruction went on till only a heap of ruins was left. "Never", says an English historian, "never perhaps in the history of the world has such havoc been wrought, and wrought so suddenly, on so splendid a city; teeming with a wealthy and industrious population in the full plenitude of prosperity one day, and on the next seized, pillaged, and reduced to ruins, amid scenes of savage massacre and horrors beggaring description."

78

THE MALAYSIAN EMPIRES OF MADJAPAHIT AND MALACCA

July 17, 1932

We have been rather neglectful of Malaysia and the Eastern Islands, and it is long since I wrote about them. I have looked back and I find that my last account of them was in letter 46, since then we have had thirty-one letters and have now reached number 78. It is difficult to keep all the countries in line.

Do you remember something of what I wrote to you just two months ago to-day? Of Cambodia and Angkor, and Sumatra and Sri Vijaya? How in Indo-China, the old Indian colonies developed in the course of many hundred years into one big State—the Empire of Cambodia? And then nature intervened and, harshly and suddenly, put an end to the city and the empire. This took place about 1300 A.C.

Almost contemporaneous with, that is existing at the same time as, the Cambodian State was another great State across the sea in the island of Sumatra. But Sri Vijaya started a little later in its career of empire and outlasted Cambodia. Its end was also rather sudden, but it was man, and not nature, that brought it about. For three hundred years the Buddhist Empire of Sri Vijaya flourished and controlled almost all the islands of the East, and for a while even had a footing in India and Ceylon and China. It was a merchant empire and trade was its chief function. But then arose another merchant State near by in the eastern part of the island of Java—a Hindu State which had refused to be subdued by Sri Vijaya.

For four hundred years, from the beginning of the

ninth century, this Eastern Javan State was menaced by the growing power of Sri Vijaya. But it succeeded in retaining its independence, and at the same time in building an amazing number of fine stone temples. The greatest of these, kown as the Borobudar temples, are still to be seen and attract numerous visitors. Having escaped the dominion of Sri Vijaya, East Java itself became aggressive and in its turn became a menace to its old rival, Sri Vijaya. Both were merchant States, crossing the seas for trade, and so they were often coming into conflict with each other.

I feel tempted to compare this rivalry of Java and Sumatra with the rivalries of modern Powers, say of Germany and England. Java, feeling that the only way to check Sri Vijaya and increase its own trade was to add to its naval strength, developed its sea power greatly. Great naval expeditions were sent out but often they did not come to grips with the enemy for years. So Java went on growing and becoming more and more aggressive. Towards the end of the thirteenth century a city was founded, named Madjapahit, and this became the capital of the growing Javan State.

So presumptuous and arrogant did this Javan State become that it actually insulted some envoys of Kublai, the Great Khan, who had sent them for tribute. Not only was no tribute paid but one of the envoys had an insulting message tattooed on the forehead! It was a very foolish and dangerous game to play with a Mongol Khan. A similar insult had resulted in the destruction of Central Asia by Chengiz, and later of Baghdad by Hulagu. And yet the little island state of Java dared to offer it. But fortunately for it the Mongols had toned down a great deal and had no desire for conquest. Naval fighting was also not much to their liking; they felt stronger on solid land. Still Kublai sent an expedition to Java to punish the guilty ruler. The Chinese defeated the Javanese and killed the King. But they do not seem to have done much damage. How the Mongols had changed under Chinese influence!

Indeed the Chinese expedition seems ultimately to have resulted in making Java, or the Madjapahit Empire as we shall now call it, stronger. This was because the Chinese introduced firearms into Java, and it was probably the use of these firearms that brought victory to Madjapahit in subsequent wars.

The Empire of Madjapahit went on expanding. This was not by chance or in a haphazard way. It was imperialist expansion organised by the State and carried on by an efficient army and navy. A woman, Queen Suhita was the ruler during part of this period of expansion. The government appears to have been highly centralized and efficient. It is stated by western historians that the system of taxation, customs, tolls and internal revenues was excellent. Among the separate departments of government were: a colonial department, a commerce department, a department of public welfare and public health, a department of the interior, and a war department. There was a supreme court consisting of two presiding officers and seven judges. The Brahman priests seem to have had a good deal of power, but the king was supposed to control them.

These departments, and even some of the names for them, remind us to some extent of the Arthashastra. But the colonial department was new. The minister in charge of the department for the interior, which dealt with the affairs of the home state, was called *mantri*. This shows that Indian traditions and culture continued in these islands twelve hundred years after the first settlements were made by the Pallava colonists from South India. This could only be so if the contacts were kept up. There is no doubt that such contacts were kept up by means of trade.

As Madjapahit was a trading empire, it is natural that the export and import trades, that is to say the trades relating to the goods that were sent out and those that were received from other countries, were carefully organized. These trades were chiefly with India, China and its own colonies. So long as there was a state of

war with Sri Vijaya it was not possible to have peaceful trade with it or its colonies.

The Javan State lasted for many hundreds of years, but the great period of the Empire of Madjapahit was from 1335 to 1380, just forty-five years. It was during this period, in 1377, that Sri Vijaya was finally captured and destroyed. With Annam, Siam and Cambodia there were alliances.

The capital city of Madjapahit was a fine and prosperous city, with a mighty Shiva temple in the centre. There were many splendid buildings. Indeed all the Indian colonies in Malaysia specialised in fine buildings. There were several other great cities and many ports in Java.

This imperialist State did not long survive its old enemy, Sri Vijaya. There was civil war and trouble with China which resulted in a great Chinese fleet coming to Java. The colonies gradually dropped off. In 1426 there was a great famine and two years later Madjapahit ceased to be an empire. It carried on, however, as an independent State for another fifty years, when the Muslim State of Malacca captured it.

Thus ended the third of the empires which had grown out of the old Indian settlements in Malaysia. In our short letters we have dealt with long periods. The first colonists came from India almost at the beginning of the Christian era, and we are now in the fifteenth century. So we have surveyed fourteen hundred years of the history of these settlements. Each of the three empire States we have especially considered—Cambodia, Sri Vijaya and Madjapahit—lasted for hundreds of years. It is well to remember these long periods as they give some idea of the stability and efficiency of these States. Fine architecture was their special love, and trade their main business. They carried on the tradition of Indian culture and mixed with it harmoniously many elements from Chinese culture.

You will remember that there were many other Indian settlements besides the three I have especially

mentioned. But we cannot consider each one separately. Nor can I say much about two neighbouring countries—Burma and Siam. In both these countries powerful States arose and there was a great deal of artistic activity. Buddhism spread in both of them. Burma was invaded by the Mongols once, but Siam was never invaded by China. Both Burma and Siam, however, often paid tribute to China. It was a kind of offering which a respectful younger brother might make to an elder. In return for this tribute rich gifts came from China to the younger brother.

Before the Mongol invasion of Burma, the capital of the country was the city of Pagan in north Burma. For over two hundred years this city was the capital and, it is said that it was a very beautiful city, its only rival being Angkor. Its finest building was the Anand temple, one of the most beautiful examples of Buddhist architecture in the world. There were many other magnificent buildings. Indeed even the ruins of Pagan city now are beautiful. Pagan's days of greatness were from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. There was some trouble and confusion in Burma for some time afterwards and north and south Burma were separate. In the sixteenth century a great ruler arose in the south and he united Burma again. His capital was Pegu in the south.

I hope this short and sudden reference to Burma and Siam will not confuse you. We have arrived at the end of a chapter in the history of Malaysia and Indonesia, and I wanted to complete our survey. So far, the principal influences, political and cultural, which affected these parts had their origin in India and China. As I have told you already, the continental countries in the south-east of Asia, like Burma, Siam, Indo-China, were more influenced by China; the islands and the Malay Peninsula were more influenced by India.

Now a new influence comes on the scene. This is brought by the Arabs. Burma and Siam were not affected by this, but Malay and the islands succumb to

it and soon a Muslim empire grows up.

Arab traders had visited these islands and settled there for a thousand years or more. But they were intent on business and did not otherwise interfere with the governments. In the fourteenth century Arab missionaries came out from Arabia and they met with success, especially in converting some of the local rulers.

Meanwhile political changes were taking place. Madjapahit was expanding and crushing Sri Vijaya. When Sri Vijaya fell, large members of refugees went to the south of the Malay Peninsula and founded the city of Malacca there. This city, as well as the State, grew rapidly and by 1400 it was already a large city. The Javanese people of Madjapahit were not liked by their subject peoples. As is usual with imperialists they were tyrannous, and many people preferred going to the new State of Malacca to remaining under Madjapahit. Siam was also at the time rather aggressive. So Malacca became a place of refuge for many people. There were both Buddhists and Muslims. The rulers were at first Buddhists but later they adopted Islam.

The young State of Malacca was menaced by Java on the one side and Siam on the other. It tried to find friends and allies among the other small Muslim States in the islands. It even appealed to China for protection. At that time the Mings, who had displaced the Mongols, ruled in China. It is remarkable how all the little Islamic States in Malaysia turned to China for protection at the same time. This shows that there must have been some immediate threat from powerful enemies.

China had always followed a policy towards the Malaysian countries of friendly but dignified isolation. It was not keen on conquest. It felt that it had little to gain from them, but it was prepared to teach them her civilization. The Ming Emperor, apparently decided to vary this old policy and to take greater interest in these countries. He does not seem to have approved

of the aggression of Java and of Siam. So to check these and to make the power of China felt by others, he sent out a vast fleet under Admiral Cheng Ho. Some of the ships in this fleet were 400 feet in length.

Cheng Ho made many trips and visited almost all the islands—Philippines, Java, Sumatra, Malay Peninsula, etc. He even came to Ceylon and conquered it and carried off the King to China. In his last expedition he went as far as the Persian Gulf. Cheng Ho's voyages in the early years of the fifteenth century had great influence over all the countries he visited. Wishing to check Hindu Madjapahit and Buddhist Siam he deliberately encouraged Islam, and the State of Malacca became firmly established under the protection of his great fleet. Cheng Ho's motives were of course purely political and had nothing to do with religion. He himself was a Buddhist.

So the State of Malacca became the head of the opposition to Madjapahit. Its strength grew and gradually it seized the colonies of Java. In 1478 the city of Madjapahit itself was captured. Islam then became the religion of the court and of the cities. But in the countryside, as in India, the old faith and myths and customs continued.

The Malaccan Empire might have become as great and as long-lived as Sri Vijaya and Madjapahit. But it did not have the chance. The Portuguese intervened and within a few years, in 1511, Malacca fell to them. So the fourth of these empires gave place to a fifth, which itself was not to have a long life. And for the first time in history Europe became aggressive and dominant in these eastern waters.

79

EUROPE BEGINS TO GRAB IN EASTERN ASIA

July 19, 1932

We ended our last letter with the appearance of the Portuguese in Malaysia. You will remember my telling you a short while ago of the discovery of the sea routes, and how the Portuguese and the Spanish had a kind of race to reach the East first. Portugal went east; Spain went west. Portugal managed to come round Africa to India; Spain stumbled by mistake on America, and later came round South America to Malaysia. We can now join up some of our threads, and carry on our story of Malaysia.

Spices (pepper, etc.), as you perhaps know, are produced in hot climates, in countries near the equator. Europe does not produce them at all. South India and Ceylon produce some. But most of these spices came from the Malaysian islands, called the Malaccas. These islands are in fact called the Spice Islands. From the earliest times there was a great demand in Europe for these spices, and they were regularly sent. By the time they reached Europe they were very valuable. In Roman times pepper was worth its weight in gold. Although spices were so valuable and were in such demand in the West, Europe took no steps to get them itself. For a long time the spice trade was in the hands of Indians; later the Arabs controlled it. It was the lure of the spices that drew the Portuguese and Spaniards on and on from different sides of the world, till they met in Malaysia. The Portuguese had a lead in this quest as the Spanish got busy, and very profitably busy, in America on the way.

Soon after Vasco de Gama reached India *via* the Cape of Good Hope, many Portuguese ships came the same way and they went further east. Just then the new empire of Malacca controlled the spice and other trade. So immediately the Portuguese came into conflict with it and with the Arab traders generally. Their Viceroy, Albuquerque, seized Malacca in 1511 and put an end to Muslim trade. The Portuguese now controlled the trade to Europe, and their capital in Europe, Lisbon, became the great commercial centre for distributing spices and many other eastern goods in Europe.

It is worth noting that although Albuquerque was a harsh and cruel enemy to the Arabs, he tried to be friendly with the other commercial people in the East. In particular, he treated all the Chinese he came across with especial courtesy, with the result that favourable reports of the Portuguese were carried to China. Probably hostility to the Arabs was due to the Arab predominance in Eastern trade.

Meanwhile the search for the Spice Islands continued and Magellan, who later crossed the Pacific and went round the world, was a member of the expedition which found the Malaccas. For over sixty years, the Portuguese had no rival in the spice trade to Europe. Then in 1565 Spain occupied the Philippine Islands, and thus a second European power appeared in eastern waters. But Spain made little difference to Portuguese trade as the Spanish were not primarily a commercial people. They sent soldiers and missionaries to the East. Meanwhile Portugal had a monopoly of the spice trade, so much so that even Persia and Egypt had to get their spices through the Portuguese. They would not even allow anyone else to trade directly with the Spice Islands. So Portugal grew rich, but it made no attempt to develop colonies. As you know it is a small country and it did not have enough men to send out. It is surprising enough what this little country did for a hundred years, the whole of the sixteenth century, in the East.

Meanwhile the Spanish stuck to the Philippines and tried to make as much money from them as possible. They did little except extort tribute. With the Portuguese they had come to terms to avoid conflict in eastern waters. The Spanish government would not allow the Philippines to trade with Spanish America as they were afraid that the gold and silver of Mexico and Peru might flow out to the East. Only one ship a year came and went. This was called the "Manilla Galleon" and you can imagine how eagerly this annual visit must have been awaited by the Spanish in the Philippines. For two hundred and forty years this 'Manilla Galleon' crossed the Pacific between the Islands and America.

In Europe, these successes of Spain and Portugal were making other nations turn green with envy. As we shall see later Spain dominated over Europe at that time. England was hardly a first rate power. In the Netherlands, that is Holland and part of Belgium, there had been a revolt against Spanish rule. The English people, sympathising with the Dutch and envious of Spain helped the Dutch privately. Some of their seamen went about committing what amounted to piracy on the high seas by capturing the Spanish treasure ships from America. The leader at this rather risky but profitable game was Sir Francis Drake, the "bold sea rover" of the Harrow song. He called it singeing the King of Spain's beard.

In 1577 Drake went out with five ships to plunder the Spanish colonies. He was successful in the raid but he lost four of his ships. Only one of the ships—the "Golden Hind"—reached the Pacific and Drake came back to England on this *via* the Cape of Good Hope. Thus he went right round the world and the *Golden Hind* was the second ship to do so, the first being Magellan *Vittoria*. It took three years to go round.

The singeing of the Spanish King's beard could not go on for long without leading to trouble and soon war came between England and Spain. The Dutch were already fighting Spain. Portugal was also involved in

this war as for some years past the same king had been ruling over Spain and Portugal. With a great deal of good luck and determination, England, to the surprise of Europe, came out well out of this war. The "Invincible Armada" sent by Spain to conquer Britain, you will remember, was wrecked. But we are for the present concerned with the East.

Both the English and the Dutch invaded the Far East and attacked the Spanish and Portuguese. The Spanish were all concentrated in the Philippines and they could easily defend it. But the Portuguese were hard hit. Their eastern empire spread for six thousand miles from the Red Sea to the Moluccas, the Spice Islands. They were established near Aden, in the Persian Gulf, in Ceylon, in many places on the Indian coast and of course all over the eastern islands and in Malay. Gradually they lost their eastern empire; town after town, settlement after settlement, went to the Dutch or the English. Even Malacca fell in 1641. All that remained were a few small outposts in India and elsewhere. Goa in western India is the chief of these and the Portuguese are still there, and it forms part of the Portuguese Republic which was established some years ago. The great Akbar tried to take Goa from the Portuguese but even he did not succeed.

So Portugal passes out of eastern history. The little country had taken an enormous mouthful. It could not swallow it, and it exhausted itself in the attempt. Spain sticks on to the Philippines but plays little part in eastern affairs. The mastery of the valuable eastern trade now passes to Holland and England. Both the countries had already laid themselves out for this by the formation of trading companies. In England Queen Elizabeth gave a charter in 1600 to the East India Company. Two years later the Dutch East India Company was formed. Both these Companies were meant for trade only. They were private companies but they were often helped by the State. They were mostly interested in the Malaysian spice trade. India was at the time a

powerful country under the Mughal Emperors and could not be safely angered.

The Dutch and the English often fell out amongst themselves, and the English ultimately withdrew from the eastern islands and paid more attention to India. The great Mughal Empire was then weakening and this afforded an opportunity to foreign adventurers. We shall see later how such adventurers came from England and France and tried, by intrigue and fighting, to get parts of this dissolving empire.

80

AN AGE OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY IN CHINA

July 22, 1932

So you have been ill, my dear, and for aught I know, may still be laid up. It takes time for news to reach the inside of a jail. I can do very little to help you and you will have to look after yourself. But I shall think of you a great deal. Strange, how we are all spread out—you, far away in Poona; Mummie, unwell in Allahabad; and the rest of us in various prisons!

For some days I have found it a little difficult to write these letters to you. It was not easy to keep up the pretence of having a talk with you. I thought of you lying ill in Poona, and I wondered when I would see you again; how many more months or years would pass before we met; and how you would have grown during the interval.

But too much of musing is not good, especially in jail, and I must pull myself up, and forget to-day for a while, and think of yesterday.

We were in Malaysia, were we not? And we saw a strange happening. Europe was becoming aggressive in Asia; the Portuguese came, and then the Spanish; and later come the English and the Dutch. But the activities of these Europeans were for a long time largely confined to Malaysia and the islands. To the west there was a strong India under the Mughals; to the north was China, also well able to look after herself. So India and China had little interference from the Europeans.

It is but a step from Malaysia to China. Let us go there now. The Yuan dynasty founded by Kublai Khan, the Mongol, is gone. A popular rebellion drove

the last of the Mongol forces beyond the Great Wall in 1368. The leader of rebellion was Hung Wu, who began life as the son of a poor labourer and had little school education. But he was a good pupil in the larger school of life and he became a successful leader, and later, a wise ruler. He did not get puffed up with conceit and pride because he had become an emperor, but throughout his life he remembered that he was a son of the people. He reigned for thirty years and his reign is remembered still for his continuous efforts to better the ordinary people from whom he had come. To the end he retained his early simplicity of tastes.

Hung Wu was the first emperor of the new Ming dynasty. His son Yung Lo was also a great ruler. He was emperor from 1402 to 1424. But I must not inflict these Chinese names upon you. There were several good rulers and then, as usually happens, there was deterioration. But let us forget the emperors and consider this period in China's history. It is a bright period and there is a singular charm about it. The word "Ming" itself means bright. The Ming dynasty lasted for two hundred and seventy-six years, from 1368 to 1644. It is the most typically Chinese of all dynasties and during their rule the genius of the Chinese people had full scope. It is a period of peace, both domestic and foreign. There is no aggressive foreign policy; no imperialist adventures. There is friendship with the neighbouring countries. Only in the north there is some danger from the nomadic Tartar tribes. For the rest of the eastern world China is very much the elder brother, the clever, favoured and cultured one, very conscious of his superiority, but wishing well to the younger brothers and willing to teach them and share with them his own culture and civilization. And they in their turn all looked up to it. For some time Japan even acknowledged the suzerainty of China, and the Shogun, who ruled Japan, called himself the vassal of the Ming Emperor. From Korea and from the Indonesian islands—Java, Sumatra, etc.—and Indo China

came tribute.

It was in Yung Lo's reign that the great naval expedition under Admiral Cheng Ho went out to Malaysia. For nearly thirty years Cheng Ho wandered all over the eastern seas right up to the Persian Gulf. This looks like an imperialist attempt to overawe the island States. Apparently however there was no intention of conquest or other gain. The growing power of Siam and Madjapahit probably induced Yung Lo to send out this expedition. But, whatever the reason may have been, the expedition had very great results. It checked Madjapahit and Siam, and encouraged the new Muslim state of Malacca; and it spread Chinese culture all over Indonesia and the East.

Because there was peace and friendship between China and her neighbours more attention could be given to domestic affairs. There was good government and the burden on the peasantry was lessened by a lowering of the taxes. The roads and waterways and canals and reservoirs were improved. Public granaries were established to make provision for bad harvests and hard times. The government issued paper money and thus increased credit and facilitated trade and the exchange of commodities. This paper money was widely used, and 70% of the taxes could be paid in it.

Even more notable was the cultural history of this period. The Chinese have for ages been a cultured and artistic people. The good government of the Ming period and the encouragement given to art brought out the genius of the people. Splendid buildings arose, and great paintings, and the Ming porcelains are famous for their graceful shapes and beautiful workmanship. The paintings rivalled those great ones which Italy was then producing under the urge of the Renaissance.

China, at the end of the fifteenth century was far ahead of Europe in wealth, industry and culture. During the whole of the Ming period, no country in Europe or elsewhere could compare with China in the happiness and artistic activity of its people. And remember that

this covered the great Renaissance period in Europe.

One of the reasons why the Ming period is very well known artistically is because it has left for us numerous examples of its fine work. There are big monuments, and fine carving in wood and ivory and jade, and bronze vases, and porcelains. Towards the end of the Ming period the designs have a tendency to become too elaborate and this rather spoils the carving or painting.

It was during this period that the Portuguese ships first came to China. They reached Canton in 1516. Albuquerque had taken good care to treat all the Chinese he came across well and favourable reports had reached China. So they were well received. But soon after, the Portuguese started misbehaving in many ways and erected forts at several places. The Chinese government was surprised at this barbarity. It took no hasty action but ultimately it drove the whole lot of them out. The Portuguese then realised that their usual methods did not pay in China. They became more peaceful and humble and in 1557 they obtained permission to settle down near Canton. Macao was then founded by them.

With the Portuguese came Christian missionaries. One of the most famous of these was St. Francis Xavier. He spent a good deal of his time in India and you will find many missionary colleges named after him. He also went to Japan. He died in a Chinese port before he was allowed to land. Christian missionaries were not encouraged by the Chinese. Two Jesuit priests, however, disguised themselves as Buddhist students and studied Chinese for several years. They became great Confucian scholars and also won reputations as scientists. One of these was named Matteo Ricci. He was a very able and brilliant scholar and was also tactful enough to get round the Emperor. He threw off his disguise later and through his influence Christianity attained a much better position in China.

The Dutch came to Macao early in the seventeenth century. They asked for permission to trade. But

there was little love between them and the Portuguese and the latter tried their best to prejudice the Chinese against them. They told the Chinese that the Dutch were a nation of ferocious pirates! So the Chinese refused to give permission. A few years later the Dutch sent a big fleet from their city of Batavia in Java to Macao. Very foolishly they tried to take Macao by force but the Chinese and Portuguese were much too strong for them.

The English followed the Dutch, but they also had little success. It was after the Ming period was over that they got a share in the China trade.

The Ming period, like all things, good and bad, came to an end about the middle of the seventeenth century. The little Tartar cloud in the north grew and grew till it cast its shadow on China itself. You will remember the old Kin or Golden Tartars. They had driven away the Sungs to the south of China, and they in their turn were driven out by the Mongols. A new tribe, cousin to these Kins, now became prominent north of China, where Manchuria is now. They called themselves Manchus. It was these Manchus who finally replaced the Mings.

But the Manchus would have had great difficulty in conquering China, if China had not been split up in rival factions. Foreign invasions in almost every country—China, India, etc.—have always succeeded because of the weakness of that country and the internal conflicts of its people. So in China there were disturbances all over the country. Perhaps the later Ming emperors were corrupt and incompetent, or economic conditions were such as to bring about a social revolution. The struggle against the Manchus was also costly and became a great strain. Brigand leaders cropped up everywhere, and the biggest of these was actually emperor for a short time. The general of the Mings, who was leading the armies against the Manchus was Wu San-kwei. He was hard put to it what to do between the brigand emperor and the Manchus. Very foolishly, or perhaps traitor-

ously, he asked the Manchus to help him against the brigand. The Manchus gladly did so—and of course remained in Peking! Wu San-Kwei then, convinced of the helplessness of the Ming cause, deserted it and joined the foreign invaders, the Manchus.

It is not surprising that this man, Wu San-Kwei, is loathed in China to this day and regarded as one of the great traitors of their history. Entrusted with the defence of the country, he went over to the enemy and actually helped him to bring about the submission of the southern provinces. His reward came by his appointment by the Manchus as the Viceroy of these very provinces he had won for them.

By 1650 the city of Canton was captured by the Manchus and the conquest of China was complete. They won perhaps because they were better fighters than the Chinese. Perhaps too long a period of peace and prosperity had weakened the Chinese in a military sense. But the rapidity of the Manchu conquest was due to other reasons also, notably the great care they took to conciliate the Chinese. In former times the Tartar invasions were often accompanied by cruelty and massacre. On this occasion every effort was made to win over the Chinese officials and these very persons were appointed again to offices. Thus Chinese officials occupied the highest posts. The old Ming methods of government were also not changed. The system appeared to be the same, but the guiding hands at the top were changed.

But two important facts denoted that the Chinese were under foreign rule. Manchu troops were stationed at important centres; and the Manchu custom of wearing the queue or pigtail was imposed on the Chinese as a sign of submission. Most of us have always associated the Chinese with these pigtails. But it was not a Chinese custom at all. It was a sign of slavery, like the many signs which some Indians adopt to-day without feeling the shame and the degradation of it. The Chinese have now given up the pigtail.

So ended this bright Ming period in China. One wonders why it fell so rapidly after nearly three centuries of good government. If the government was as good as it is supposed to be why were there revolts and internal troubles? Why could not the foreign invaders from Manchuria be stopped? Probably the government became oppressive towards the end. And it may be that too much parental government weakened the people. Spoon feeding is not good for children or nations.

One wonders also why China, during these days, highly cultured as she was, did not advance in other directions—science, discovery, etc. The peoples of Europe were far behind her; yet you can see them, during the days of the Renaissance, full of energy and adventure and the spirit of enquiry. You can compare the two to a cultured person of middle age, rather fond of a quiet life, not keen on new adventure and a disturbance of his routine, busy with his classics and his art; and a young boy, rather uncouth, but full of energy and enquiry and seeking adventure everywhere. There is great beauty in China, but it is the calm beauty of the afternoon or evening.

81

JAPAN SHUTS HERSELF UP

July 23, 1932

From China we might as well go on to Japan, making a very brief stay in Korea on the way. The Mongols had of course dominated Korea. They had tried to attack Japan also but without success. Kublai Khan sent several expeditions to Japan but they were repelled. The Mongols never seem to have felt at ease on the sea. They were essentially continental people. Japan, being an island, escaped them.

Soon after the Mongols were driven out of China, there was a revolution in Korea and the rulers who had submitted to the Mongols were driven out. The leader of this revolt was a patriot Korean, Yi Tai-jo. He became the new ruler and the founder of a dynasty which lasted over five hundred years, from 1392 till quite recent times when Japan annexed Korea. Seoul was then made the capital and it has remained so ever since. We cannot go into these five hundred years of Korean history. Korea, or Chosen as it was again called, carried on, an almost independent country, but under the shadow of China and often paying tribute to it. With Japan there were several wars and on some occasions Korea was successful. But now there is no comparison between the two. Japan is a great and powerful empire, with all the vices of imperialist powers; poor Korea is a bit of this empire, ruled and exploited by the Japanese, and struggling rather helplessly, but bravely, for her freedom. But this is recent history and we are still in the distant past.

In Japan, you will remember that the Shogun had become the real ruler towards the end of the twelfth

century. The Emperor was almost a figurehead. The first Shogunate, known as the Kamakura Shogunate, lasted for nearly one hundred and fifty years and gave the country efficient government and peace. The usual decline of the ruling dynasty followed, and inefficiency and luxury and civil war. There were conflicts between the emperor, who wanted to assert himself, and the Shogun. The Emperor failed and so did the old Shogunate, and a new line of Shoguns rose to power in 1338. This was the Ashikaga Shogunate which lasted for 235 years. But this was a period of conflict and war. It was almost contemporaneous with the Mings in China. One of these Shoguns was very anxious to win the good will of the Mings, and he went so far as to acknowledge himself the vassal of the Ming Emperor. Japanese historians are very annoyed at this slight to Japan and bitterly denounce this man.

Relations with China were naturally very friendly and a new interest arose in Chinese culture which was then flowering under the Mings. Everything Chinese was studied and admired—painting, poetry, architecture, philosophy and even the science of war. Two famous buildings: the Kinkakuji (the Golden Pavilion) and the Ginkakuji (the Silver Pavilion) were built at this time.

Side by side with this artistic development and luxury, there was much suffering of the peasantry. Taxation of the peasants was exceedingly heavy, and the burden of the civil wars fell largely on them. Conditions became worse and worse till the central government hardly functioned outside the capital.

The Portuguese arrived in 1542 during these wars. It is interesting to note that firearms were first brought to Japan by them. This seems very strange as China had long known them and indeed Europe had got to know of them from China, through the Mongols.

Three men ultimately rescued Japan from the hundred years old civil war. They were Norbunaga, a Daimyo or noble, Hideyoshi, a peasant, and Tokugawa

Iyeyasu, one of the great nobles. By the end of the sixteenth century the whole of Japan was again united. Hideyoshi, the peasant, is one of the ablest statesmen of Japan. But it is said that he was very ugly—short and stumpy with a face like that of an ape.

Having united Japan, these people did not know what to do with their large army. So for want of any other occupation they invaded Korea. But they repented soon enough. The Koreans defeated the Japanese navy and controlled the Sea of Japan between the two countries. They did this largely with the help of a new kind of ship with a roof like the back of a tortoise and with iron plates. These ships were called "Tortoise Boats." They could be rowed backwards and forwards at will. The Japanese warships were destroyed by these boats.

Tokugawa Iyeyasu, the third of the men named above, managed to profit greatly by the civil wars. So much so that he became vastly rich and owned nearly one-seventh of Japan. It was he who built the city of Yedo in the middle of his possessions. This later became Tokyo. Iyeyasu became Shogun in 1603, and thus began the third and last Shogunate, the Tokugawa Shogunate, which lasted for over two hundred and fifty years.

Meanwhile the Portuguese had been carrying on trade in a small way. They had no European rivals for quite fifty years, the Spanish coming in 1592, and the Dutch and English even later. Christianity seems to have been introduced by St. Francis Xavier in 1549. Jesuits were allowed to preach and were even encouraged. This was for political reasons, as the Buddhist monasteries were supposed to be hot beds of intrigue. For this reason these monks were suppressed and favour was shown to the Christian missionaries. But soon enough the Japanese came to feel that these missionaries were dangerous, and immediately they changed their policy and tried to drive them out. As early as 1587 an Anti-Christian Decree was issued ordering all missionaries to

leave Japan within twenty days on pain of death. This was not aimed at merchants. It was stated that merchants could remain and trade but if they brought a missionary on their ships, both the ship and the goods in it would be confiscated. This decree was passed for purely political reasons. Hideyoshi scented danger. He felt that the missionaries and their converts might become politically dangerous. And he was not much mistaken.

Soon after, an incident occurred which convinced Hideyoshi that his fears were justified, and enraged him. The Manilla Galleon, which, you may remember, used to go once a year between the Philippines and Spanish America, was driven by a typhoon on to the Japanese coast. The Spanish captain tried to frighten the local Japanese by showing them a map of the world and especially pointing out the vast possessions of the Spanish King. The captain was asked how Spain had managed to get this huge empire. Nothing so simple, he replied. The missionaries went first and, when there were many converts, soldiers were sent to combine with the converts and overthrow the government. When a report of this reached Hideyoshi he was not over pleased and he became still more bitter against the missionaries. He allowed the Manilla Galleon to go, but he had some of the missionaries and their converts put to death.

When Iyeyasu became Shogun he was more friendly to foreigners. He was especially interested in developing foreign trade, particularly with his own port, Yedo. But after Iyeyasu's death the persecution of Christians began again. Missionaries were forcibly driven out and Japanese converts were made to give up Christianity. Even the commercial policy changed, so afraid were the Japanese of the political designs of the foreigners. At any cost they wanted to keep the foreigner out.

One can understand this reaction of the Japanese. What surprises one is that they should have been penetrating enough to spot the wolf of imperialism in the

sheep's clothing of religion, even though they had had little intercourse with Europeans. In later years and in other countries, we know well how religion has been exploited by the European powers for their own aggrandisement.

And now began a unique thing in history. This was the closing up of Japan. Deliberately, the policy of isolation and exclusion was adopted, and once adopted, it was pursued with amazing thoroughness. The English, not finding themselves welcome, gave up going to Japan in 1623. Next year the Spaniards, who were feared most of all, were deported. It was laid down that only non-Christians could go abroad for trade; and even they could not go to the Philippines. Finally a dozen years later, in 1636, Japan was sealed up. The Portuguese were expelled; all Japanese, Christians or non-Christians, were forbidden to go abroad for any reason whatsoever; and no Japanese living abroad could return to Japan on pain of death! Only some Dutch people remained, but they were absolutely forbidden to leave the ports and to go into the interior of the country. In 1641 even these Dutch people were removed to a little island in Nagasaki harbour and were kept almost like prisoners there. Thus, just ninety-nine years after the first Portuguese came, Japan cut off all foreign intercourse, and shut herself up.

A Portuguese ship came in 1640 with an embassy asking for the restoration of trade. But there was nothing doing. The Japanese killed the envoys and most of the crew, and left some of the crew alive to go back and report.

For over two hundred years Japan was almost completely cut off from the world, even from its neighbours, China and Korea. The few Dutchmen on the island, and an occasional Chinaman, under strict supervision, were the only links with outside. This cutting off is a most extraordinary thing. At no period in recorded history, and in no country, is there another example of this. Even mysterious Tibet or Central

Africa communicated often enough with their neighbours. It is a dangerous thing, to isolate oneself; dangerous both for an individual and for a nation. But Japan survived it, and had internal peace, and recovered from the long wars. And when at last, in 1853, she opened her door and windows again, she performed another extraordinary thing. She went ahead with a rush, made up for lost time, caught up to the European nations, and beat them at their own game.

How dull is the bald outline of history, and how thin and lifeless are the figures that pass through it! Yet sometimes, when one reads a book written in the olden time, life seems to pour into the dead past, and the stage seems to come quite near to us, and living and loving and hating human beings move on it. I have been reading about a charming lady of old Japan, the Lady Murasaki, who lived many hundreds of years ago, long before the civil wars of which I have written in this letter. She has written a long account of her life at the Emperor's court in Japan, and as I read extracts from this, with its delightful touches, and intimacies, and courtly futilities, the Lady Murasaki became very real to me, and a vivid picture arose of the limited but artistic world of the court of old Japan.

82

EUROPE IN TURMOIL

August 4, 1932

I have not written these letters to you for many days; it must be nearly two weeks since I wrote. One has moods in prison—as indeed one has in the world outside too—and lately I have felt little inclined to write these letters, which no one sees but myself. They are pinned together and put away to await the time, months or years hence, when perhaps you may see them. Months or years hence! when we meet again, and have a good look at each other, and I am surprised to find how you have grown and changed. We shall have plenty to talk of and to do then, and you will pay little attention to these letters. There will be quite a mountain of them by that time, and how many hundreds of hours of my prison life will be locked up in them!

But still I shall carry on with these letters and add to the pile of them already written. Perhaps they may interest you; and certainly they interest me.

We have been in Asia for some little time now, and we have followed her story in India, in Malaysia, and in China and Japan. We left Europe, rather suddenly, just when it was waking up and beginning to get interesting. There was a 'renaissance,' a re-birth. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that there was a new birth, because the Europe which we find developing in the sixteenth century was no copy of any older period. It was a new thing, or at least an old thing with an entirely new covering on it.

Everywhere in Europe there is turmoil and restlessness, and a bursting out of an enclosed place. For

many hundreds of years a social and economic structure modelled on feudal lines had covered Europe and held it in its grip. For a while this shell prevented growth. But the shell was cracking now in many places. Columbus and Vasco de Gama and the early discoverers of the sea routes broke through the shell, and the sudden and astounding wealth of Spain and Portugal from the Americas and the East, dazzled Europe and hastened the change. Europe began to look outside its narrow waters and to think in terms of the world. Great possibilities of world trade and dominion opened out. The bourgeoisie grew more powerful, and feudalism became more and more a hindrance in western Europe.

Feudalism was already out of date. The essence of this system had been shameless exploitation of the peasantry. There had been forced labour, unpaid work, all manner of special dues and payments to the lord, and this lord himself was the judge. The suffering of the peasantry had been so great that, as we have seen, peasant riots and wars had broken out frequently. These peasant wars spread and became more and more frequent, and the economic revolution which took place in many parts of Europe, replacing the feudal system with the middle class or bourgeois state, followed, and was largely brought about by these agrarian revolts and *jacqueries*.

But do not think that these changes were brought about quickly. They took long and for scores of years civil war raged in Europe. A great part of Europe was indeed ruined by these wars. They were not only peasant wars, but, as we shall see, religious wars between Protestant and Catholic, national wars of freedom, as in the Netherlands, and the revolt of the bourgeoisie against the absolute power of the King. All this sounds very confusing, does it not? Well, it is confusing and complicated. But if we look at the big events and movements, we shall be able to make something out of it.

The first thing to remember is that there was great distress and suffering among the peasantry, which result-

ed in the peasant wars. The second thing which we must note is the rise of the bourgeoisie and the growth of the productive forces. More labour was applied in producing things and there was more trade. The third thing to note is the fact that the Church was the greatest of the landowners. It was a tremendous vested interest and was thus, of course, very much interested in the feudal system continuing. It wanted no economic change which might deprive it of a great deal of its wealth and property. Thus when the religious revolt from Rome took place, it fitted in with the economic revolution.

This great economic revolution was accompanied by or followed by, changes in all directions—social, religious, political. If you take a distant and large enough view of Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, you will be able to make out how all these activities and movements and changes were inter-related and connected together. Usually three great movements of this period are emphasized—Renaissance, Reformation, and Revolution—the three rupees. But behind all these, remember was the economic distress and turmoil leading to the economic revolution, which was far the most important of all the changes.

The Renaissance was the re-birth of learning—the growth of art and science and literature, and the languages of European countries. The Reformation was a revolt against the Roman Church. It was popular revolt against the corruption of the Church; it was also a revolt of the princes of Europe against the claims of the Pope to lord it over them; and thirdly it was an attempt to reform the Church from within. Revolution was the political struggle of the bourgeoisie to control the kings and limit their power.

Behind all these movements lay another factor—printing. You will remember that the Arabs learned paper making from the Chinese, and Europe learnt it from the Arabs. Still, it took a long time before paper was cheap and abundant. Towards the end of the

fifteenth century books began to be printed in various parts of Europe—in Holland, Italy, England, Hungary, etc. Try to think what the world was like before paper and printing became common. We are so used to books and paper and printing now that a world without them is most difficult to imagine. Without printed books it is almost impossible to teach many people even reading and writing. Books have to be copied out laboriously by hand and can reach only a small number of people. Teaching has to be largely oral and students have to learn by heart everything. You see that even now in some primitive *maktabs* and *pāthshālās*.

With the coming of paper and printing an enormous change takes place. Printed books appear—school books and others. Very soon there are many people who can read and write. The more people read, the more they think (but this applies to the reading of thoughtful books, not to much of the trash that appears to-day). And the more one thinks, the more one begins to examine existing conditions and to criticize them. And this often leads to a challenge of the existing order. Ignorance is always afraid of change. It fears the unknown and sticks to its rut however miserable it may be there. In its blindness it stumbles on anyhow. But with right reading comes a measure of knowledge and the eyes are partly opened.

It was this opening of the eyes by means of paper and printing that helped tremendously all these great movements we have been speaking of. Among the earliest books to be printed were Bibles, and many persons who had only heard the Latin text of the Bible till then and had not understood it, were now able to read the book in their own language. This reading often made them very critical and somewhat independent of the priests. School books also appeared in large numbers. From this time onwards we find the languages of Europe developing rapidly. Till now Latin had overshadowed them.

The history of Europe is full of the names of great

men during this period. We shall come across some of them later. Always, when a country or continent breaks through the shell which has prevented growth, it shoots ahead in many directions. We find this in Europe, and the story of Europe of this period is most interesting and instructive because of the economic and other great changes that take place. Compare it to the history of India or even of China for the same period. As I have told you both these countries were ahead of Europe in many ways at the time. And yet there is a passivity about their history as compared with the dynamic nature of European history of this period. There are great rulers and great men in India and China and a high degree of culture, but, and especially so in India, the masses seem to be spiritless and passive. They put up with changes of rulers without any great objection. They seem to have been broken in, and have become too much used to obeying to challenge authority. Thus their history, though interesting occasionally, is more a record of events and rulers than of popular movements. I am not sure how far this is true of China; but of India it certainly has been true for many hundred years. And all the ills that have come to India during this period have been due to this unhappy condition of our people.

Another tendency to be noticed in India is the desire to look back and not forward; to the heights we once occupied and not to the heights we hope to occupy. And so our people sighed for the past, and, instead of getting a move on, obeyed anyone who chose to order them about. Ultimately empires rest not so much on their strength as on the servility of the people they dominate over.

83

THE RENAISSANCE

August 5, 1932

Out of the turmoil and travail that was spreading all over Europe rose the fine flower of the Renaissance. It grew in the soil of Italy first, but it looked across the centuries to old Greece for inspiration and nourishment. From Greece it took its love of beauty, and added to the beauty of bodily form, something that was deeper, that came from the mind and was of the spirit. It was an urban growth and the cities of north Italy gave shelter to it. In particular, Florence was the home of the early Renaissance.

Florence had already produced, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Dante and Petrarch, the two great poets of the Italian language. During the middle ages it was for long the financial capital of Europe, where the big money-lenders congregated. It was a little republic of rich and not very admirable people, who often ill-treated their own great men. "Fickle Florence", it has been called. But, in spite of the money-lenders and the despots and tyrants, this city produced, in the second half of the fifteenth century, three remarkable men: Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael. All three of them were very great artists and painters; Leonardo and Michelangelo were great in other directions also. Michelangelo was a wonderful sculptor also, hewing mighty figures out of the solid marble; and he was a great architect and the mighty Cathedral of St. Peters in Rome was largely fashioned by him. He lived to a tremendous age, nearly ninety, and almost to his dying day he laboured at St. Peters. He was an unhappy man, always seeking for something be-

hind the surface of things, always thinking, always attempting amazing tasks. "One paints with his head, not with his hands," he once said.

Leonardo was the oldest of the three, and in many ways the most wonderful. Indeed he was the most remarkable man of his age, and, remember, it was an age which produced many great men. A very great painter and sculptor, he was also a great thinker and scientist. Always experimenting, always probing, and trying to find out the reason for things, he was the first of the great scientists that have laid the foundations of modern science. "Kindly nature," he said, "sees to it that you may find something to learn everywhere in the world." He was a self-taught man, and began teaching himself Latin and mathematics at the age of thirty. He became a great engineer also, and he was the first to discover that blood circulated through the body. He was fascinated by the structure of the body. "Coarse people," he said, "of bad habits and shallow judgments do not deserve so beautiful an instrument, such a complex anatomical equipment, as the human body. They should merely have sack for taking in food and letting it out again, for they are nothing but an alimentary canal!" He was himself a vegetarian, and was very fond of animals. A habit of his was to buy caged birds in the market and set them free immediately.

Most amazing of all were Leonardo's attempts at aviation or flying in the air. He did not succeed, but he went a good way towards success. There was no one to follow up his theories and experiments. Perhaps if there had been a couple of Leonardos to follow him, the modern aeroplane might have been invented two or three hundred years ago. This strange and wonderful man lived from 1452 to 1519. His life, it is said, "was a dialogue with nature." He was always asking questions, and trying to find answers to them by experiment; he seemed to be ever reaching forward, trying to grasp the future.

I have written at some length about these three men

of Florence, and especially about Leonardo, because he is a favourite of mine. The history of the republic of Florence is not very pleasant or edifying, with its intrigues and despots and knavish rulers. But much may be forgiven Florence—we may excuse even her money-lenders!—for the great men she has produced. The shadow of these great sons of hers lies on her still, and as you pass the streets of this beautiful city, or look at the lovely Arno as it flows by under the medieval bridges, an enchantment seems to come over you, and the past becomes vivid and alive. Dante goes by, and Beatrice, the lady he loved, passes, leaving a faint perfume trailing behind her. And Leonardo seems to march along the narrow streets, lost in thought, pondering over the mysteries of life and nature.

So the Renaissance flowered in Italy from the fifteenth century, and gradually travelled to other western countries. Great artists tried to put life in stone and canvas, and the galleries and museums of Europe are full of their paintings and sculptures. In Italy there was a decline in the artistic renaissance by the end of the sixteenth century. In the seventeenth century Holland produced great painters, one of the most famous being Rembrandt, and in Spain, about this time, there was Velasquez. But I shall not mention more names. There are so many of them. If you are interested in the great master painters, go to the galleries and look at their works. Their names are of little account; it is their art and the beauty they created that has a message for us.

During this period—the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries—science also gradually forges ahead and comes into its own. It had a stiff fight with the Church, for the Church did not believe in making people think and experiment. For it the earth was the centre of the universe and the sun went round it and the stars were fixed points in the heavens. Any one who said otherwise was a heretic and might be dealt with by the Inquisition. In spite of this a Pole, named Copernicus, did

challenge this belief and proved that the earth went round the sun. Thus he laid the foundations of the modern idea of the universe. He lived from 1473 to 1543. Somehow he managed to escape the wrath of the Church for his revolutionary and heretical opinions. Others who came after him were not so fortunate. Giordano Bruno, an Italian, was burned in Rome by the Church in 1600 for insisting that the earth went round the sun and the stars were themselves suns. A contemporary of his, Galileo, who made the telescope, was also threatened by the Church, but he was weaker than Bruno, and thought it more expedient to recant. So he admitted to the Church that he was mistaken in his folly and the Earth was of course the centre of the universe, and the sun went round it. Even so he had to spend some time in prison, doing penance.

Among the prominent men of science in the sixteenth century was Harvey who finally proved the circulation of the blood. In the seventeenth century comes one of the greatest names in science—Isacc Newton, who was a great mathematician. He discovered what is called the law of gravitation—of how things fall—and thus wrested another of nature's secrets.

So much, or rather so little, for science. Literature also forged ahead during this period. The new spirit that was abroad affected the young European languages powerfully. These languages had existed for some time, and we have seen that Italian had already produced great poets. In England there had been Chaucer. But Latin, the speech and language of the learned and of the Church all over Europe, overshadowed them all. They were the vulgar tongues, the vernaculars, as many people very curiously call the Indian languages still. It was almost undignified to write in them. But the new spirit, and paper and printing, pushed these languages ahead. Italian was the first in the field; then followed French and English and Spanish and, last of all, German. In France a band of young writers in the sixteenth century resolved to write in their

own language and not in Latin, and to improve their "vulgar tongue" till it became a suitable medium for the best of literature.

I was reading, some days ago, a quotation from an essay by one of these young Frenchmen—Joachim du Bellay. The essay is called: "La Deffense et Illustration de la langue Françoyse"—note the old spelling. As I read this I felt how apposite it was for us in India to-day, and yet our case is far stronger. French to-day is a beautiful language, rich in literature and capable of expressing the finest shades and nuances of meaning. But French in Joachim du Bellay's time was far from developed. It was indeed a "vulgar tongue." But our languages—Hindi and Urdu, Bengali, Marathi, Gujrati are old enough and developed enough and have fine literatures, though these may not be so varied as in European languages. The Dravidian languages are older still and are also rich. So we have ready made mediums for all our activities and moods. It is right therefore that we should insist on using them and not take pride in the use of a foreign language. What a fraud I am, you will say, for I do the very thing I warn you against! Why do I write these letters in English? Why indeed? Because my own education has been so defective. I wish I could write with ease in Hindi. But I shall try to be more virtuous in future.

So the languages of Europe progressed and gained in richness and power till they became the fine languages they are to-day. I shall not mention the names of many famous writers; I shall give just a few. In England there was the famous Shakespeare from 1564 to 1616; and immediately following him in the seventeenth century was Milton, the blind poet of *Paradise Lost*. In France there was the philosopher Descartes and the dramatist, Molière, both in the seventeenth century. Molière was the founder of the Comédie Française, the great State theatre in Paris. A contemporary of Shakespeare in Spain was Cervantes, who wrote "Don Quixote".

One other name I shall mention, not because of its greatness, but because it is well known. This is Machiavelli, another Florentine. He was just an ordinary politician in the 15th-16th centuries, but he wrote a book, called *The Prince*, which became famous. This book gives us a glimpse into the minds of the princes and politicians of the day. Machiavelli tells us that religion is necessary for a government, not, mind you, to make people virtuous, but to help to govern them and keep them down. It may even be the duty of the ruler to support a religion which he believes to be false! "A prince", says Machiavelli, "must know how to play at once man and beast, lion and fox. He neither should nor can keep his word when to do so will turn against him........I venture to maintain that it is very disadvantageous always to be honest; useful on the other hand, to appear pious and faithful, humane and devout. Nothing is more useful than the appearance of virtue."

Pretty bad, is it not? The greater the scoundrel, the better the prince! If this was the state of an average prince's mind in those days in Europe, it is not surprising that there was continuous trouble there. But why go so far back? Even to-day the imperialist powers behave much like the Prince of Machiavelli. Beneath the appearance of virtue, there is greed and cruelty and unscrupulousness; beneath the kid gloves of civilization, there is the red claw of the beast.

84

THE PROTESTANT REVOLT AND THE PEASANTS' WAR

August 8, 1932

I have written to you several letters already about Europe during the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. I have told you something about the passing of the Middle Ages, and the great distress of the peasantry, and the rise of the bourgeoisie, and the discovery of America and the sea ways to the East, and the progress of art, and science, and the languages of Europe. But much still remains to be told about this period to complete the outlines of the picture. Remember that my last two letters, as well as the one about the sea routes, and this one that I am writing, and perhaps one or two others to follow, deal with the same period in Europe. I write separately about different movements and activities but they took place more or less at the same time, and each influenced the other.

Even before the times of the Renaissance there had been rumblings in the body of the Roman Church. Both the princes and peoples of Europe were beginning to feel the heavy hand of the Church, and to grumble a little, and to doubt. Frederick II, the Emperor, you will remember, had quite an argument with the Pope, and cared little even for excommunication. These signs of doubt and disobedience angered Rome and it resolved to crush the new heresy. For this purpose the Inquisition was created and there was a burning of unhappy men who were styled heretics, and women who were accused of being witches, all over Europe. John Huss of Prague was tricked and burnt, and thereupon his followers in Bohemia, the Hussites, raised the banner of

revolt. Not all the terrors of the Inquisition could put down this new spirit of revolt against the Roman Church. It spread, and to it was added, no doubt, the feeling of the peasantry against the Church as a big landowner. And the Princes in many places encouraged this spirit for selfish reasons. They were casting envious and covetous eyes on the vast properties of the Church. The printing of books and Bibles added to the smouldering fire.

Early in the sixteenth century there rose in Germany, Martin Luther, who was to become the great leader of the revolt against Rome. He was a Christian priest. After a visit to Rome he was disgusted with the corruption and luxury of the Church. This controversy grew and grew till it split up the Roman Church into two, and divided western Europe into two camps, religious as well as political. The old orthodox Greek Church of Russia and east Europe kept apart from this controversy. So far as it was concerned Rome was itself far removed from the true faith.

In this way began the Protestant revolt. It was called Protestant, because it *protested* against various dogmas of the Roman Church. Ever since then there have been two main divisions of Christianity in western Europe—Roman Catholic and Protestant. But the Protestants are divided up into many sects.

This movement against the Church is called the Reformation. It was in the main a popular revolt against corruption as well as the authoritarianism of the Church. Side by side with this, many princes wanted to put an end to all attempts by the Pope to dominate over them. They resented very much the interference of the Pope in their political affairs. There was also a third phase of the Reformation, an attempt by loyal Churchmen to reform the Church of its abuses from within.

You will perhaps remember the two orders of the Church—the Franciscan and the Dominican. In the sixteenth century, just about the time Martin Luther

was gaining in strength, a new Church order was started. This was by a Spaniard, Ignatius of Loyola. He called it the "Society of Jesus" and its members were called Jesuits. I have already referred to these Jesuits visiting China and the East. This "Order of Jesus" was a very remarkable society. It aimed at training people for efficient and whole time service of the Roman Church and the Pope. It gave a hard training, and so successful was this, that they produced remarkably efficient and faithful servants of the Church. So faithful were they to the Church that they obeyed it blindly and without questioning, and they gave their all to it. Where the Church stood to gain by it, they would sacrifice themselves willingly to it; indeed they have had a reputation of being wholly without scruple in the service of the Church. The good of the Church justified and excused everything.

This remarkable body of men were of the greatest help to the Roman Church. Not only did they carry its name and message to distant lands, but they raised the standard of the Church in Europe. Partly on account of the internal movement for reform, and largely because of the menace of the Protestant revolt, there was much less corruption in Rome. Thus the Reformation split the Church in two and at the same time reformed it internally to some extent.

As the Protestant revolt developed some of the kings and princes of Europe sided with one side, some with the other. Religious motives had little to do with this. It was mostly politics and the desire for gain. The Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire at that time was Charles V, a Hapsburgh. Owing to the marriages of his father and grand-father, he happened to inherit a large empire which included Austria, Germany (nominally), Spain, Naples and Sicily, the Netherlands and Spanish America. It was a favourite method in Europe in those days, the way of adding to one's dominions by marriage. Thus Charles, for no merit of his own, happened to rule over half Europe, and for a while he

seemed to be a great man. He decided to side with the Pope against the Protestants. The idea of the Reformation was not in keeping with the empire idea. But many of the smaller German princes sided with the Protestants and there were two factions throughout Germany—the Roman and the Lutheran. This naturally resulted in civil war in Germany.

In England the much-married Henry VIII went against the Pope and favoured the Protestants or rather himself. He coveted the property of the Church and, after breaking with Rome, he confiscated all the rich lands of the abbeys and monasteries and the Churches. A personal reason for his break with the Pope was because he wanted to divorce his wife and marry another woman.

In France the position was peculiar. The Chief Minister of the King was the famous Cardinal Richelieu who practically ruled the kingdom. Richelieu kept France on the side of Rome and Pope and crushed Protestantism there. But, such are the intrigues of politics, he encouraged Protestantism in Germany so that there might be civil war there and Germany might become weak and disunited! The antagonism of France and Germany to each other runs like a thread through the history of Europe.

Luther was the great Protestant and he opposed the authority of Rome. But do not imagine that he was tolerant in religion. He was as intolerant as the Pope he was fighting. So the Reformation did not bring religious liberty to Europe. It bred a new type of fanatic—the puritan and the Calvinist. Calvin was one of the later leaders of the Protestant movement. He was a good organiser and for a while he controlled the city of Geneva. Do you remember the great monument to the Reformation in the park at Geneva? The huge expanse of wall with statues of Calvin and others? Calvin was so intolerant that he burnt many persons because they simply did not agree with him and were free thinkers.

Luther and the Protestants were helped greatly by the mass of the people because there was a strong feeling against the Roman Church. As I have told you the peasantry were very miserable and there were frequent riots. These riots developed into a regular Peasants' War in Germany. The poor peasants rose against the evil system which crushed them and demanded the most ordinary and reasonable rights—that serfdom should cease, and the right to fish and hunt. But even these were denied them. And the Princes of Germany tried to crush them with every species of barbarity. And Luther, the great reformer, what was his attitude? Did he side with the poor peasants and support their just demands? Not he! On the peasants' demand that serfdom should end, Luther said: "This article would make all men equal and so change the spiritual kingdom of Christ into an external wordly one. Impossible! An earthly kingdom cannot exist without inequality of persons. Some must be free, others serfs, some rulers, others subjects." He curses the peasants and calls for their destruction. "Therefore let all who are able hew them down, slaughter and stab them, openly or in secret, and remember that there is nothing more poisonous, noxious and utterly diabolical than a rebel. You must kill him as you would a mad dog; if you do not fall upon him, he will fall upon you and the whole land." Pretty language, coming especially from a religious leader and a reformer.

So one sees that all the talk of freedom and liberty was meant for the big people only, not for the masses. The masses had lived, almost in every age, a life not far removed from that of the animals. They must continue to do so, according to Luther, because that was laid down by heaven. The Protestant revolt against Rome had been largely caused by the great economic distress of the people. It had fitted in with it and had utilized it. But when it was feared that the serfs might go too far and gain their freedom from serfdom—this was a little enough thing—the Protestant leaders joined

the princes in crushing them. The day of the masses was still far distant. The new age that was dawning was the age of the middle classes, the bourgeoisie. From all the conflicts and wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries one can see this class, almost inevitably, rising step by step.

Whenever this rising bourgeoisie was fairly strong, there Protestantism spread. There were many kinds and sects of Protestants. In England the King made himself the head of the Church—the "Defender of the Faith"—and the Church practically ceased to be a Church and became just a department of the government. The Church of England has continued to be so ever since.

In other countries, especially in Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands, other sects grew in prominence. Calvinism spread as it was in keeping with the growth of the bourgeoisie. In religious matters Calvin was terribly intolerant. There was torture and burning for the heretics, and strictest discipline of the faithful. But in business matters his teaching was more in keeping with growing trade and industry, which the Roman teaching was not. Profits in business were blessed, and credit was encouraged. So the new bourgeoisie adopted this new version of the old faith and, with a perfectly easy conscience, went on making money. They had utilized the masses in their fights against the feudal nobles. Now, having triumphed over the nobles, they ignored or sat upon the masses.

But the bourgeoisie had to face many obstacles yet. There was the king still in the way. The king had joined with the men of the town in fighting the nobles. Now that the nobles had been reduced to powerlessness, the king was much stronger, and he seemed to be master of the field. The contest between him and the middle classes was yet to come.

85

AUTOCRACY IN SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURY EUROPE

August 26, 1932

I have again been very negligent. It is long since I wrote these letters. There is none to question me or keep me up to the mark, and so I slacken occasionally and busy myself with other things. If we were together it would be different, would it not? But why should I write then, if you and I can talk to each other?

My last letters to you were about Europe at a time of great turmoil and change. They dealt with the great changes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the changes that came with or followed the economic revolution which put an end to the Middle Ages and raised up the bourgeoisie. In our last letter we saw Christendom in western Europe breaking up into two factions—Catholic and Protestant. Germany was the special battle ground of the religious struggles between these two factions because the two parties were more or less evenly balanced. The other countries of western Europe were also involved to some extent in these struggles. England kept apart from the continental religious struggle. Under her king, Henry VIII, she cut herself off from Rome without much internal disturbance, and established a Church of her own which was something between the Catholic and the Protestant. Henry cared little for religion. He wanted the Church lands and he got them; and he wanted to marry again and he did so. Thus the main result of the Reformation was to free the kings and princes from the leading strings of the Pope.

While these movements of the Renaissance and

Reformation and the economic turmoil were changing the face of Europe, what was the political background like? What was the map of Europe like in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? It was of course a changing map during these two hundred years. Let us then look at the map as it was early in the sixteenth century.

In the south-east the Turks hold Constantinople and their empire advances into Hungary. In the south-west corner, the Moslem Saracens, descendants of the Arab conquerors, have been driven away from Granada, and Spain has emerged as a Christian power under the joint rule of Ferdinand and Isabella. The long centuries of conflict between Christian and Moslem in Spain have made the Spaniard cling to his Catholic religion passionately and with bigotry. It is in Spain that the terrible Inquisition is established. Under the glamour of the discovery of America and the wealth that this was bringing her, Spain was beginning to play a leading part in European politics.

Look at the map again. We recognise England and France, much as they are now. In the centre of the map is the Empire, divided up into many German States, each of which was more or less independent. It is a curious collection of little States under princes, dukes, bishops, electors and such like persons. There are also many towns with special privileges, and the northern commercial towns have joined up and formed a confederation. Then there is the republic of Switzerland, in fact free, but not yet formally recognised to be so; the republic of Venice, and also other city republics in north Italy; the territory belonging to the Popes, round about Rome, called the Papal States; and the kingdom of Naples and Sicily to the south of them. To the east there is a big Poland between the Empire and Russia, and the kingdom of Hungary, with the Ottoman Turks casting their shadow on it. Further to the east is Russia, newly developing into a strong State, after it had got rid of the Mongols of the Golden Horde. And to the north and west there are some other countries.

Such was Europe early in the sixteenth century. In 1520 Charles V became Emperor. He was a Hapsburg and, as we have seen, he managed to inherit the kingdoms of Spain, and of Naples and Sicily, and the Netherlands. It is strange how whole countries and peoples changed masters in Europe because of certain royal marriages. Millions of people and great countries were just inherited. Sometimes they were given as dowries. The island of Bombay thus came to an English king, Charles II, as the dowry of his wife Catharine of Braganza (in Portugal). By careful marriage, therefore, the Hapsburghs gathered an empire and Charles V became head of this. He was a very ordinary man, chiefly noted for eating enormously, but for the moment his great dominions made him seem a colossus in Europe.

In the same year as Charles became emperor, Suleiman became head of the Ottoman Empire. During his reign this empire spread in all directions, and especially in eastern Europe. The Turks came right up to the gates of Vienna, but just missed capturing this beautiful old city. But they terrified the Hapsburgh emperor and he thought it expedient to buy off Suleiman by paying him tribute. Imagine the great emperor of the Holy Roman Empire paying tribute to the Sultan of Turkey. Suleiman is known as Suleiman the Magnificent. He took the title of emperor himself as he considered himself the representative of the eastern Byzantine Cæsars.

There was a great deal of building activity in Constantinople at the time of Suleiman. Many beautiful mosques were made. The artistic renaissance in Italy seems to have had its counterpart in the east also. Not only in Constantinople was there artistic activity, but in Persia and in Khorasan in Central Asia, beautiful paintings were being made.

In India, we have seen Babar, the Mughal, come down from the north-west and establish a new dynasty. This was in 1526, when Charles V was Emperor in

Europe and Suleiman was ruling in Constantinople. We shall have a great deal to say of Babar and his brilliant descendants. It is interesting to note here, however, that Babar was himself a Renaissance type of prince, but a better one than the European type of the period. He was an adventurer, but gallant knight, with a passion for literature and art. In the Italy of that period there were also princes who were adventurers and lovers of literature and art and their petty courts had a superficial brilliance. The Medici family of Florence and the Borgias were famous then. But these Italian princes, and most others in Europe at the time, were true followers of Machiavelli, unscrupulous, intriguing, and despotic, using the poison cup and the dagger of the assassin for their opponents. It is hardly fair to compare the knightly Babar with this crowd, just as it would be out of place to compare their petty courts with the court of the Mughal Emperors at Delhi or Agra—Akbar and Shah Jahan and others. It is said that these Mughal courts were magnificent and were perhaps the richest and most splendid that have ever existed.

We have drifted, almost unawares, to India from Europe. But I wanted you to realise what was happening in India and elsewhere during the days of the European renaissance. There was artistic activity then in Turkey and Persia and Central Asia and India. In China these were the peaceful and prosperous days of the Mings when a high level of artistic production was reached. But all this art of the renaissance period, except perhaps in China, was more or less courtly art. It was not an art of the people. In Italy after the great artists, some of whose names I have mentioned, passed away, the later renaissance art became trivial and unimportant.

So Europe in the sixteenth century was divided up between Catholic and Protestant princes. Princes counted then, not their people. Italy, Austria, France, and Spain were Catholic; Germany half Catholic and half Protestant; England Protestant simply because her king chose to be so. And because England was Prot-

estant, this was enough reason for Ireland, whom England tried to conquer and oppress, to remain Catholic. But it is not quite correct to say that the religion of the people did not matter. It did matter in the end and many a war and revolution took place because of it. It is difficult to separate the religious aspect from the political and the economic. I think I have told you already that the Protestant revolt against Rome took place especially where the new trading class was becoming strong. We can thus see that there was a connection between religion and trade. Again, many of the princes were afraid of the religious reformation because they thought that under cover of it there might be civil revolution, and their authority might be overthrown. If a man was prepared to challenge the religious authority of the Pope, why then he might also challenge the political authority of the king or prince. This was dangerous doctrine for the kings. They still clung to the divine right of their kind to rule. Even the Protestant princes were not prepared to give this up.

And yet, in spite of the Reformation, kings were all powerful in Europe. At no previous period were they so autocratic. Previously the great feudal nobles checked them and often challenged their authority. The merchants and bourgeoisie did not like these nobles; neither did the king. So with the help of the merchant class, as well as the peasantry, the king crushed the nobles, and became all powerful. The bourgeoisie, although they had grown in power and importance, were not strong enough yet to check the king. But soon the middle classes began to object to many things that the king did. In particular, they objected to repeated and heavy taxation, and to interference in religion. The king did not like this at all. He was annoyed at their presumption in objecting to anything that he did. So he put them in jail and punished them otherwise. There was arbitrary imprisonment, just as there is to-day in India because we refuse to submit to the British Government. The king also interfered with

trade. All this made matters worse and resistance to the king grew. This fight of the bourgeoisie for power against the autocracy of the kings lasted many hundred years, till recent times, and many a king's head had to fall before the idea of the divine right of kings was finally buried, and kings were put in their proper places. In some countries the victory was won early, in others late. We shall follow the fortunes of the fight in subsequent letters.

But in the sixteenth century the king was boss almost everywhere in Europe—almost, but not quite. You will remember that in Switzerland, the poor peasants of the mountains had dared to defy the great Hapsburgh monarch and had won their freedom. So, in the European sea of absolutism and autocracy, the little peasant republic of Switzerland stood out as an island where kings had no place.

Soon matters came to a head in another place—the Netherlands—and the fight for popular and religious liberty was fought out and won. It is a little country, but it was a great fight against the greatest power in Europe then—Spain. Thus the Netherlands gave a lead to Europe. Then came a struggle for popular freedom in England which cost a king his head, and gave the victory to the Parliament of the day. The Netherlands and England thus took the lead in these struggles of the bourgeoisie against autocracy. And because the bourgeoisie won in these countries, it was able to take advantage of the new conditions and forge ahead of other countries. Both built powerful navies later; both developed trade with distant countries; and both laid the foundations of empire in Asia.

We have not said much about England so far in these letters. There was little to say as England was not a very important country in Europe. But a change takes place now and, as we shall see, England rapidly forges ahead. We have referred to Magna Charta, and the early beginnings of Parliament, and to the peasant troubles, and civil wars between different dynasties.

During these wars murder and assassination by the kings was common enough. Large numbers of the feudal nobles died in the battles and thus their class lost its strength. A new dynasty—the Tudors—came to the throne and they played the autocrats well enough. Henry VIII was a Tudor. So was his daughter, Elizabeth.

After the Emperor Charles V, the Empire split up. Spain and the Netherlands went to his son Philip II. Spain at the time towered over Europe as the most powerful monarchy. You will remember that it possessed Peru and Mexico and gold poured from the Americas. But, inspite of Columbus and Cortés and Pizarro, Spain could not take advantage of the new conditions. It was not interested in trade. All that it cared for was religion of the most bigoted and cruel kind. All over the country the Inquisition flourished and the most horrible tortures were inflicted on so-called heretics. From time to time great public festivals were arranged when batches of these "heretics", men and women, were burned alive on huge pyres in the presence of the king and royal family and ambassadors and thousands of people. *Autos-da-fé,* acts of faith, these public burnings were called. Terrible and monstrous all this seems. The whole history of Europe of this period is so full of violence and horrible and barbarous cruelty and religious bigotry as to be almost unbelievable.

The Empire of Spain did not last long. The gallant fight of little Holland shook it up thoroughly. A little later, in 1588, an attempt to conquer England failed miserably, and the "Invincible Armada" which carried the Spanish troops never even reached England. It was wrecked on the high seas. This is not surprising as the man in command of the Armada knew nothing about ships or the sea. Indeed he went to King Philip II and "humbly requested His Majesty to relieve him from the post, for, he said, he knew nothing of sea strategy and, moreover, was a bad sailor. But the king answered that the fleet would be led by the Lord himself!"

So gradually the Empire of Spain faded off. In the days of Charles V it was said that the sun never set on his empire, a saying which is often repeated about another proud and overbearing empire to-day!

86

THE NETHERLANDS FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

August 27, 1932

I told you in my last letter how kings became supreme, almost all over Europe, in the sixteenth century. In England there were the Tudors, in Spain and Austria the Hapsburgs. In Russia and in great parts of Germany and Italy there were autocratic monarchs. France was perhaps typical of this kind of king ruling over a personal monarchy, the whole kingdom being considered almost the personal property of the king. A very able minister, the Cardinal Richelieu, helped in strengthening France and her monarchy. France has always thought that her strength and security lay in the weakness of Germany. So Richelieu, who was a great Catholic priest, and who crushed Protestants mercilessly in France, actually encouraged Protestants in Germany. This was intended to encourage mutual conflict and disorder in Germany, and thus to weaken her. This policy met with great success. There was, as we shall see, civil war of the worst kind in Germany which ruined her.

In France also there was civil war in the middle of the seventeenth century—the war of the Fronde it is called. But the King crushed both the nobles and the merchants. The nobles had no real power left, but to keep them on his side the King allowed them innumerable privileges. They paid practically no tax. Both the nobility and clergy were exempt from taxation. The whole burden of taxation fell on the common people and particularly the peasantry. With the money extorted from these poor miserable wretches great and magnificent palaces arose and a splendid court surrounded the King. Do you remember visiting Versailles, near

Paris? Those great palaces there, that we go to see now, grew up in the seventeenth century out of the blood of the French peasantry. Versailles was the symbol of absolute and irresponsible monarchy; and it is not surprising that Versailles became the fore-runner of the French Revolution which put an end to all monarchy. But the revolution was still far off in those days. The king was Louis XIV, the Grand Monarque he was called, the Roi Soleil, the sun round whom revolved the planets of his court. For the enormous period of 72 years he reigned, from 1643 to 1715, and for his chief minister he had another great Cardinal, Mazarin. There was a great deal of luxury on the top, and royal patronage of literature and science and art, but under a thin covering of splendour, there was misery and suffering. It was a world of beautiful wigs and lace cuffs and fine clothing covering a body that was seldom washed and was full of dirt and filth.

We are all of us influenced a great deal by pomp and pageantry, and it is not surprising that Louis XIV influenced Europe greatly during his long reign. He was the model king and others tried to copy him. But this Grand Monarque, what was he? "Strip your Louis Quatorze of his king-gear," says a well-known English writer, Carlyle, "and there is left nothing but a poor forked radish with a head fantastically carved." It is a hard description, probably applicable to most people, kings and commoners.

Louis Quatorze carries us to 1715, the beginnings of the eighteenth century. Meanwhile, much had happened in the other countries of Europe, and some of these events deserve notice from us.

I have told you already of the revolt of the Netherlands against Spain. The story of their gallant fight is worthy of closer study. An American named J. L. Motley has written a famous account of this struggle for freedom and he has made it an absorbing and fascinating tale. I hardly know of a novel that is more gripping than this moving account of what took place

three hundred and fifty years ago in this little corner of Europe. The book is called *The Rise of the Dutch Republic,* and I have read it in prison. I doubt if I would have had the time to read it outside. What a great deal I have to thank jail for!

The Netherlands include both Holland and Belgium. Their very name tells us that they are low lands. Holland comes from hollow-land. Great parts of them are actually below sea level and enormous dykes and walls have to protect them from the North Sea. Such a country, where one has to fight the sea continually, breeds hardy sea-faring folk, and people who cross the seas frequently take to trade. So the people of the Netherlands became traders. They produced woollen and other goods, and the spices of the East also went to them. Rich and busy cities arose—Bruges and Ghent and, especially, Antwerp. As the trade with the East developed these cities grew in wealth, and Antwerp became in the 16th century the commercial capital of Europe. In its house of exchange, it is said, that five thousand merchants gathered daily to do business with each other; in its harbour there were as many as 2500 vessels at one time. Nearly five hundred vessels came to it and went from it every day. These merchant classes controlled the city governments.

This was just the kind of trading community that would be attracted by the new religious ideas of the Reformation. Protestantism spread there, especially in the north. The chances of inheritance made the Hapsburg Charles V, and after him his son Philip II, rulers of the Netherlands. Neither of them could tolerate any kind of freedom—political or religious. Philip tried to crush the privileges of the cities as well as the new religion. He sent as Governor-General the Duke of Alva who has become famous for his oppression and tyranny. The Inquisition was established, and a "Blood-Council" which sent thousands to the stake or the scaffold.

It is a long story and I cannot tell it here. As the

tyranny of Spain increased, the strength of the people to combat it increased also. A great and wise leader rose amongst them—Prince William of Orange, known as William the Silent—who was more than a match for the Duke of Alva. The Inquisition actually condemned in one sentence in 1568 all the inhabitants of the Netherlands to death as heretics, with a few named exceptions. This was an amazing sentence unique in history—three or four lines condemning three millions of people!

At first the fight seemed to be between the Netherland nobles and the King of Spain. It was almost like the struggles between king and nobles in other countries. Alva tried to crush them and many a great noble had to mount the scaffold at Brussels. One of the popular and famous nobles who was executed was Count Egmont. Later, Alva, hard up for money, tried new and heavy taxation. This touched the pockets of the merchant classes and they rebelled. Added to this was the struggle between Catholic and Protestant.

Spain was a mighty power, in the full pride of her greatness; the Netherlands were just a few provinces of merchant folk and effete and extravagant nobles. There was no comparison between the two. Yet Spain found it difficult enough to crush them. There were massacres repeatedly, whole populations being wiped out. Alva and his generals rivalled Chengiz Khan and Timur in their destruction of human life. Often they improved on the Mongols. City after city was besieged by Alva, and the untrained men and often the women of the city fought the trained soldiers of Alva on land and water till starvation made it impossible for them to carry on. Preferring even absolute destruction of all they valued to the Spanish yoke, the Hollanders broke open the dykes and let in the North Sea to drown and drive away the Spanish troops. As the struggle proceeded it became more and more ruthless and both sides became exceedingly cruel. The siege of beautiful Haarlem stands out, bravely defended to the last but ending

in the usual massacre and plunder by the Spanish soldiery; the siege of Alkmaar, which escaped by the piercing of the dykes; and Leyden, surrounded by the enemy, with starvation and disease killing thousands. There were no green leaves left on the trees in Leyden; they had all been eaten up. Men and women fought with famishing dogs on dung hills for scraps. Still they held out, and from the ramparts, haggard and starving people hurled defiance at the enemy, and told the Spaniards that they would live on rats and dogs and anything rather than surrender. "And when all has perished but ourselves be sure that we will each devour our left arms, retaining our right to defend our women, our liberty and our religion, against the foreign tyrant. Should God, in his wrath, doom us to destruction, and deny us all relief, even then we will maintain ourselves for ever against your entrance. When the last hour has come, with our hands we shall set fire to the city, and perish men, women, and children together, in the flames, rather than suffer our homes to be polluted, and our liberties to be crushed."

Such was the spirit of the people of Leyden. But despair reigned there as day after day went by without relief; and they sent a message to their friends of the estates of Holland outside. The estates took the great decision to drown their dear land rather than allow Leyden to fall to the enemy. "Better a drowned land than a lost land." And to Leyden, their sorely stricken sister city, they sent this answer: "Rather will we see our whole land and all our possessions perish in the waves, than forsake thee, Leyden!"

At last, dyke after dyke was broken and, helped by a favourable wind, the sea waters rushed in, carrying the Dutch ships, bringing food and relief. And the Spanish troops fearful of this new enemy, the sea, departed in haste. So Leyden survived, and, in memory of the heroism of her inhabitants, the University of Leyden, famous since then, was established in 1575.

There are many such tales of heroism, and many of

horrible butchery. In beautiful Antwerp there was terrible massacre and looting, eight thousand being killed. The "Spanish Fury" it was called.

But the great struggle was largely carried on by Holland, and not by the lower part of the Netherlands. By bribery and coercion the Spanish rulers succeeded in winning over many of the nobles of the Netherlands and made them crush their own countrymen. They were helped by the fact that there were far more Catholics than Protestants in the south. They tried to win over the Catholics and partly succeeded. And the nobles! It was shameful to what treason and trickery many of them stooped to win favour and wealth for themselves from the Spanish King, even though their country might perish. It is the old policy of empire, to divide and rule, and here in our country we have seen it at full play, and many a person has succumbed to it, and many an Indian played traitor to his country.

Addressing the general assembly of the Netherlands, William of Orange said: " 'Tis only by the Netherlands that the Netherlands are crushed. Whence has the Duke of Alva the power of which he boasts, but from yourselves—from Netherland cities? Whence his ships, supplies, money, weapons, soldiers? From the Netherland people."

So, ultimately, the Spaniards succeeded in winning over that part of the Netherlands which is roughly Belgium to-day. But Holland they could not subdue, try as they did. It is curious to notice that right through the struggle, almost to the end, Holland did not disclaim allegiance to Philip II of Spain. They were prepared to keep him as king if he would recognise their liberties. At last they were forced to cut themselves away from him. They offered the crown to their great leader William, but he would not have it. Circumstances thus forced them, almost against their will, to become a republic. So great was the kingly tradition of those days.

The struggle in Holland went on for many years.

It was not till 1609 that Holland became independent. But the real fight in the Netherlands took place from 1567 to 1584. Philip II of Spain unable to defeat William of Orange had him killed by an assassin's hand. He offered a public reward for his assassination, such was the morality of Europe at that time. Many attempts to kill William failed. The sixth attempt succeeded in 1584 and the great man—"Father William" he was called all over Holland—died; but he had done his work. The Dutch Republic had been forged through sacrifice and suffering. Resistance to tyrants and despots does good to a country and to a people. It trains and strengthens. And Holland, strong and self-reliant, immediately became a great naval power and spread out to the Far East. Belgium, separated from Holland, continued under Spanish rule.

Let us look at Germany to complete our picture of Europe. There was a terrible civil war here from 1618 to 1648, called the Thirty Years' War. It was between Catholic and Protestant, and the little princes and electors of Germany fought each other and the Emperor; and the Catholic King of France had a look in on the side of the Protestants just to add to the confusion; and ultimately the King of Sweden, Gustavas Adolphus—the 'Lion of the North' he was called—came down and defeated the Emperor and thus saved the Protestants. But Germany was a ruined country. The mercenary soldiers were like brigands. They went about looting and plundering. Even generals of armies, having no money to pay their soldiers or even to feed them, took to looting. And, think of it, this lasted for thirty years! Massacre and destruction and looting going on year after year. There could be little or no trade; there could hardly be any cultivation. And so there was less and less food, and more and more starvation. And this of course resulted in more brigands and more looting. Germany became a kind of nursery for professional and mercenary soldiers.

At last this war came to an end, when, perhaps,

there was nothing left to plunder. But it took a long, long time for Germany to recover and pull herself together again. In 1648 the Peace of Westphalia put an end to the German civil war. By this the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire became a shadow and a ghost with no power. France took a big slice, Alsace; to keep it for over two hundred years, and then to be forced to give it back to a new Germany; and again to take it back after the Great War of 1914-18. France thus profited by this peace. But another power now arose in Germany which was going to be a thorn in the side of France. This was Prussia ruled by the House of Hohenzollern.

The Peace of Westphalia finally recognised the republics of Switzerland and Holland.

What a tale of war and massacre and plundering and bigotry I tell you. And yet this was the Europe just after the Renaissance, when there had been such a burst of energy and artistic and literary activity. I have compared Europe to the countries of Asia and pointed out the new life that was stirring in Europe. One can see this new life trying to struggle through. The birth of a new child and of a new order is accompanied with much suffering. When there is economic instability at the base, society and politics shake at the top. The new life of Europe is obvious enough. But all round it what barbarous behaviour. It was a maxim of the time that "the science of reigning was the science of lying." The whole atmosphere reeks with lies and intrigue, violence and cruelty, and one wonders how people put up with it.

87

ENGLAND CUTS OFF THE HEAD OF HER KING

August 29, 1932

We shall spend some little time on England's history now. We have largely ignored this so far as there was little of interest there during the middle ages. The country was more backward than France or Italy. The University of Oxford, however, early became a famous seat of learning, and, a little later, Cambridge followed. It was Oxford that produced Wycliffe, about whom I have already written to you.

The chief interest in early English history centres round the development of Parliament. From early days efforts were made by the nobles to limit the power of the King. There was the Magna Charta in 1215. A little later the beginnings of Parliament are visible. They are crude beginnings. There are the great nobles and bishops who develop into a House of Lords. But more important ultimately was an elected council consisting of knights and the smaller landowners and some representatives of the towns. This elected council developed into the House of Commons. Both these Councils or Houses consisted of landowners and wealthy men. Even the men in the House of Commons represented a small number of rich landowners and merchants only.

The House of the Commons had little power. They petitioned and pointed out grievances to the King. Gradually they began to interfere with taxation. Without their approval it was difficult for new taxes to be imposed or collected and so the King began the practice of asking for their approval for such taxation. The power of the purse is always a great power, and Parliament, and

especially the Commons' House, increased in strength and prestige as it gained this power. Often there was friction between the King and the Commons. But still Parliament was a feeble thing and the Tudor rulers, as I have told you, were more or less absolute monarchs. But the Tudors were clever and they avoided forcing a struggle with Parliament.

England escaped the bitter religious struggles of the Continent. There was a great deal of religious conflict and rioting and bigotry, and a scandalous number of women were burnt alive because they were considered to be witches. But compared to the Continent England was peaceful. With Henry VIII the country was supposed to turn Protestant. Of course there were many Catholics in the land, and there were also many extreme Protestants. The new Church of England, however, was something between the two; calling itself Protestant, but perhaps more Catholic than Protestant, and in reality a department of state with the King for its head. The break with Rome and the Pope, however, was complete, and there was many an "anti-Popery" riot. In Queen Elizabeth's time (she was the daughter of Henry VIII), the opening of the new sea routes to the East and to America, and the new opportunities for trade, lured many people. Fascinated by the success of Spanish and Portuguese seamen, and covetous of the wealth to be gained, England took to the sea. Sir Francis Drake and others like him at first became the pirates of the seas, plundering Spanish vessels from America. Drake then went for a mighty voyage round the world. Sir Walter Raleigh crossed the Atlantic and tried to found a settlement on the east coast of what is now the United States. This was called Virginia, as a compliment to Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen. It was Raleigh who first brought the habit of smoking tobacco to Europe from America. Then came the Spanish Armada, and the complete failure of this proud enterprise encouraged England a great deal. All this has little to do with the struggle between King and Parliament, except that it kept people's minds oc-

cupied and turned to foreign affairs. But even in Tudor times trouble brewed under the surface.

The Elizabethan period is one of the brightest in England. Elizabeth was a great queen and England produced many a great man of action in her time. But greater than the queen and her adventurer knights were the poets and dramatists of this generation, and above them all towers the immortal William Shakespeare. His plays are of course known the world over to-day, although we know little enough about him personally. He was one of a brilliant band which has enriched the English language with numerous precious gems which fill us with delight. Even the small lyrical poems of the Elizabethan period have a peculiar charm which none others have. In the simplest and sweetest of language they trip along merrily, telling us of every day happenings in a way all their own. Writing of this period an English critic, Lytton Strachey, has told us of the "noble band of Elizabethans whose strong and splendid spirit gave to England, in one miraculous generation, the most glorious heritage of drama that the world has ever known."

Elizabeth died in 1603, just two years before the great Akbar died in India. She was succeeded by the then King of Scotland because he was supposed to be next in the line of succession. He became James I and England and Scotland thus became one kingdom. What England had failed to do by violence was done peacefully. James I was a believer in the divine right of kings and disliked Parliament. He was not as clever as Elizabeth and very soon trouble arose between him and Parliament. It was during his reign that many stiff-backed Protestants in England left their native country for good and sailed on the *Mayflower* in 1620 to settle in America. They objected to the autocratic method of James I and they disliked the new Church of England and did not consider it Protestant enough. So they left home and country and set sail for the wild new land across the Atlantic. They landed on the northern coasts

in a place which they called New Plymouth. More colonists followed them, and gradually the settlements increased till there were thirteen colonies all along the eastern coast. These colonies ultimately developed into the United States of America. But that was a long way off yet.

The son of James I was Charles I and matters very soon came to a head after he became king in 1625. Parliament therefore presented to him in 1628 the "Petition of Right", which is a famous document in English history. In this petition the King was told that he was not an absolute monarch and could not do many things. He could not tax or imprison people illegally. He could not even do in the seventeenth century what the English Viceroy of India does in the twentieth—issue Ordinances and imprison people under them!

Annoyed at being told what he could do and what he could not, Charles dissolved Parliament and ruled without it. After some years however he was so hard up for money that he had to call another Parliament. There had been great anger at what Charles had been doing without Parliament, and the new Parliament was spoiling for a fight with him. Within two years, in 1642, civil war began, the King on one side, supported by many nobles and a great part of the army, the Parliament on the other, supported by the rich merchants and the city of London. For several years this war dragged on, till there arose, on the side of Parliament a great leader, Oliver Cromwell. He was a great organiser, a stern disciplinarian and a man full of religious enthusiasm for the cause. "In the dark perils of war," says Carlyle about Cromwell, "in the high places of the field, hope shone in him like a pillar of fire, when it had gone out in all the others." Cromwell built up a new army, the "Ironsides" they were called, and filled them with his own disciplined enthusiasm. The "Puritans" of the army of Parliament faced the "Cavaliers" of Charles. Cromwell won in the end and Charles, the King, became a prisoner of Parliament.

Many members of Parliament still wanted to compromise with the King, but Cromwell's new army would not listen to this, and an officer of this army, Colonel Pride, boldly marched into the Parliament house and turned out all such members. Pride's Purge this has been called. It was a drastic remedy and not very complimentary to Parliament. If Parliament objected to the King's autocracy, here was another power, their own army, which paid little attention to their legal quibbles. Such is the way of revolutions.

The remaining members of the House of Commons, called the Rump Parliament, decided to try Charles, in spite of the objection of the House of Lords, and they condemned him to death "as a tyrant, traitor, murderer, and enemy of his country." And in 1649 this man, who had been their King, and who had talked of his divine right to rule, was beheaded in Whitehall in London.

Kings die like other people. Indeed most of them in history have died violent deaths. Autocracy and kingship breed assassination and murder, and English royalties had had enough of assassination in the past. But that an elected assembly should presume to constitute itself a court, and try the King, and condemn him to death, and then have him beheaded, was a novel and an amazing thing. It was curious that the English people, who have always been very conservative and averse to rapid changes, should thus set an example of how a tyrant and a traitorous king should be treated. But the deed was done not so much by the English people as a whole as by the new "Ironsides" under Cromwell.

All kings and Caesars and princes and petty royalties of Europe were greatly shocked. What would happen to them if the common people became so presumptuous and followed the example of England? Many of them would have attacked England and crushed her, but the destinies of England were not in charge of an incompetent king then. England was for the first time

a republic and Cromwell and his army were there to defend her. Cromwell was practically dictator. He was called the "Lord Protector." Under his stern and efficient rule England's strength grew and her fleets drove away the Dutch and French and Spanish fleets. For the first time England became the chief naval power in Europe.

But the English Republic had a very short life—hardly eleven years since the death of Charles I. Cromwell died in 1658, and two years later the Republic fell. The son of Charles I, who had taken refuge in foreign countries, came back to England and he was welcomed and crowned as Charles II. This second Charles was a low and disreputable person and his idea of kingship was just to have a good time. But he was clever enough not to go against Parliament too much. He was actually in the secret pay of the French King. England lost the position she had gained in Europe during Cromwell's time, and the Dutch actually came up and burnt the English fleet in the Thames.

Charles' brother, James II, came after him and immediately there was trouble with Parliament. James was a devout Catholic and he wanted to establish the Pope's ascendancy again in England. But whatever ideas the English people had on religion, and they were vague enough, most of them were bitter against the Pope and all "Popery". James II could do nothing against this widespread feeling and, having angered Parliament, he had to fly to France for refuge.

Again Parliament had triumphed over the King, and this time quite peacefully and without civil war. The King had gone. There was no king in the country. But England was not going to be a republic again. The Englishman loves a lord, it is said, and, even more, he loves the pomp and pageantry of royalty. So Parliament searched for a new king and found one in the House of Orange, which, a hundred years before, had given William the Silent to lead the great struggle of the Netherlands against Spain. There was another

William, Prince of Orange, now, and he had married Mary of the English royal family. So William and Mary were made joint sovereigns in 1688. Parliament was supreme now, and the English revolution, giving power to the people represented in Parliament, was complete. No British king or queen has dared to challenge the authority of Parliament since that date. But, of course, there are many ways of intriguing and influencing, without definitely opposing or challenging, and several British kings have adopted these methods.

Parliament became supreme. But what was this Parliament? Do not imagine that it represented the people of England. It only represented a very small part of them. The House of Lords represented, as its name signifies, the lords or great landowners and the bishops. Even the House of Commons was an assembly of rich men, either owners of landed property or big merchants. Very few people had the vote. Till a hundred years ago there were any number of what are called "pocket boroughs" in England, that is to say constituencies which were practically in somebody's pocket. The whole constituency might consist of just one or two voters electing a member! In 1793, it is said, that 306 members of the House of Commons were elected by 160 persons in all. One tenement, named Old Sarum, returned two members to Parliament. Thus you will see that the vast majority of the people had no votes and were not represented in Parliament. The House of Commons was very far from being a popular assembly. It did not even represent the new middle classes that were rising up in the towns. It just represented the land-owning class and some rich merchants. Seats in Parliament were bought and sold, and there was a great deal of bribery. And this took place right down to 1832, just a hundred years ago, when a Reform Bill was passed after much agitation, and more people got the vote.

So we see that the victory of Parliament over the King meant the victory of a handful of rich people.

England was governed really by this handful of landowners with a sprinkling of merchants. All other classes, comprising practically the whole nation, had no say in the matter.

In the same way you must remember that the Dutch Republic, which came into existence after the great struggle with Spain, was also a rich man's republic.

After William and Mary, Anne, Mary's sister, was Queen of England. At her death in 1714, there was again some difficulty about the next king. Parliament ultimately went to Germany for their choice. They chose a German, who was then the Elector of Hanover, and made him George I of England. Probably Parliament chose him because he was dull and not at all clever and it was safer to have a foolish king than a clever one who might interfere with Parliament. George I could not even speak English; the English king was ignorant of English. Even his son, who became George II, hardly knew any English. In this way was established in England the House of Hanover, or the Hanoverian dynasty, which still flourishes there. It can hardly be said to reign, as the reigning and ruling is done by Parliament. After four Georges, there was William IV, and then the long sixty-three year reign of Victoria, and Edward VII. Last in the series is George V who is King of England now.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there was a great deal of trouble and friction between Ireland and England. There were attempts at the conquest of Ireland and rebellions and massacres right through the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. James confiscated a great deal of landed property in Ulster, in the north of Ireland, and brought over Protestants from Scotland to settle in these areas. Ever since then these Protestant colonists have remained there and Ireland has been divided into two parts: Irish and Scotch colonists; Roman Catholic and Protestant. There has been bitter hatred between the two, and of course the English have profited by this division. As ever, the rulers believe in a policy

of "divide and rule." Even now the biggest question in Ireland is the Ulster question.

During the English civil war there was a massacre of the English in Ireland. Cromwell avenged this cruelly by a massacre of the Irish, and to this day this is remembered bitterly by the Irish. There was more fighting, and there were settlements and treaties, and these were broken by the English—it is a long and painful history, the history of the agony of Ireland.

It may interest you to know that Jonathan Swift, the author of *Gulliver's Travels,* lived about this time, from 1667 to 1745. The book is a famous children's classic, but it is really a bitter satire on the England of his day. Daniel Defoe who wrote *Robinson Crusoe* was a contemporary of Swift.

88

BABAR

September 3, 1932

Let us come back to India. We have spent some time over Europe and, in many a letter, tried to see under the turmoil and struggle and warfare, and to understand what was happening there during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I wonder what impressions you have gathered of this period in Europe. Whatever your impression may be, they must be very mixed, and that is not surprising for Europe was a very mixed and curious place just then. Continuous and barbarous warfare, religious bigotry and cruelty unmatched in history, autocracy and the 'divine right' of kings, a degenerate aristocracy, and shameless exploitation of the people. China seemed to be ages ahead of all this—she was a cultured, artistic, tolerant and more or less peaceful country. India, in spite of disruption and degeneration, compared favourably in many ways.

But Europe also showed a different and a pleasanter face. There were the beginnings of modern science visible, and the idea of popular freedom begins to grow and shake the thrones of kings. Underneath these, and the cause of these and of most other activities, was the commercial and industrial development of the western and north-western European countries. Large cities grow up, full of merchants trading with distant countries, and humming with the industrial activity of the artisans. All over western Europe craft guilds, that is associations of artisans and craftsmen, grow up. These merchant and industrial classes form the bourgeoisie, the new middle class. This class grows, but it finds many obstacles—political, social, and religious. In politics and

social organization there is the remains of the feudal system. This system belonged to an age that was past. It did not fit in with the new conditions and hindered trade and industry. Feudal lords used to charge all manner of tolls and taxes which irritated the trading classes. So the bourgeoisie set itself out to remove this class from power. The king did not like the feudal nobles either as they wanted to encroach on his power. So the king and the bourgeoisie became allies against the feudal lords and deprived them of real influence. As a result, the king becomes more powerful and autocratic.

In the same way it was felt that the religious organization of the day in western Europe, and the prevailing religious ideas and notions of doing business, came in the way of the growth of trade and industry. Religion itself was connected with the feudal system in many ways, and the Church, as I have told you, was the biggest feudal landlord. For many years previously individuals and groups had risen to criticize and challenge the Roman Church. But they did not make any great difference. Now, however, the whole rising bourgeoisie wanted a change and so the movement for reform became a mighty one.

All these changes, and many others which we have already considered together, were the different aspects and phases of the revolution which brought the bourgeoisie to the front. The process seems to have been more or less the same in the western European countries, but it took place at different times in the different countries. Eastern Europe, meanwhile, and for long afterwards, was very backward industrially and so no such change took place there.

In China and India there were also craft guilds and hosts of artisans and craftsmen. Industry was as advanced, and often more so, than in west Europe. But we do not find there the growth of science at this stage as in Europe, nor is there the same kind of urge for popular freedom. In both countries there were long

traditions of religious freedom and local freedom in towns and villages and in guilds. People cared little for the king's power and autocracy so long as they were not interfered with in their local matters. Both countries had built up a social organization which had lasted for a very long time and was far more stable than anything in Europe. It was perhaps the very stability and rigidity of this organization which prevented growth. In India we have seen disruption and degeneration finally ending in the conquest of the north by the Mughal Babar. The people seem to have completely forgotten their old Aryan ideas of freedom and have become servile and resigned to any ruler. Even the Moslems who had brought a new life to the country seem to have become as degenerate and servile as the others.

Thus Europe, endowed with a freshness and energy which the old civilizations of the East seemed to lack, slowly steals ahead of them. Her sons go to the far corners of the world. The lure of trade and wealth draws her seamen to the Americas and Asia. In south-eastern Asia we saw the Portuguese put an end to the Arab Empire of Malacca. They established outposts on the Indian coast line and all over the eastern seas. But soon their mastery of the spice trade was challenged by two new sea powers, Holland and England. Portugal is driven away from the east and her eastern empire and trade perish. The Dutch take Portugal's place to some extent and many of the eastern islands are occupied by them. In 1600 Queen Elizabeth grants a charter to the East India Company, a company of London merchants, to trade in India, and two years later the Dutch East India Company is formed. Thus begins the period of grabbing by Europe in Asia. For a long time this is almost confined to Malay and the eastern islands. China was too strong for Europe under the Mings and the early Manchus who came in the middle of the seventeenth century. Japan actually went so far as to turn out every foreigner and shut herself up completely in 1641.

And India? Our story has lagged behind in India and we must fill the gap. As we shall see, India rose to be a powerful monarchy under the new Mughal dynasty and there was little danger or chance of European invasion. But Europe was already dominant on the seas.

So we come back to India. In Europe and China and Japan and Malaysia we have reached the end of the seventeenth century. We are on the verge of the eighteenth. But in India we are still in the early sixteenth, when Babar came.

Babar's victory over the feeble and contemptible Afghan Sultan of Delhi in 1526 begins a new epoch and a new empire in India—the Mughal Empire. With a brief interval, it lasted from 1526 to 1707, a period of 181 years. These were the years of its power and glory when the fame of the Great Mughal of India spread all over Asia and Europe. There were six big rulers of this dynasty and then the Empire went to pieces, and the Marathas and Sikhs and others carved out States from it. And after them came the British who profiting by the break down of the central power and the confusion in the country, gradually established their dominion.

I have told you something of Babar already. Descended from Chengiz and Timur, he had something of their greatness and military ability. But the Mongols had become more civilized since the days of Chengiz, and Babar was one of the most cultured and delightful persons one could meet. There was no sectarianism in him, no religious bigotry, and he did not destroy as his ancestors used to do. He was devoted to art and literature, and was himself a poet in Persian. Flowers and gardens he loved, and in the heat of India he thought often of his home in Central Asia. "The violets are lovely in Ferghana," he says in his memoirs, "it is a mass of tulips and roses."

Babar was only a boy of eleven when his father died and he became ruler of Samarkand. It was not a soft job. There were enemies all around him. So, at an age when little boys and girls are at school, he had to

take to the field with his sword. He lost his throne and won it back and had many a great adventure in his stormy career. And yet he managed to cultivate literature and poetry and art. Ambition drove him on. Having conquered Kabul, he crossed the Indus to India. He had a very small army, but he had the new artillery which was then being used in Europe and western Asia. The huge Afghan host that went to fight him, went to pieces before this little well-trained army and its artillery and victory came to Babar. But his troubles were not over and his fate hung in the balance many a time. Once when grave danger threatened him, his generals advised him to retreat to the north. But he was made of sterner stuff and said that he preferred facing death to retreating. He loved the wine cup. He decided, however, at this crisis in his life, to give up drinking, and he broke all his drinking cups. He happened to win, and he kept his pledge about wine.

Babar was barely four years in India when he died. They were four years of fighting and little rest and he remained a stranger to India and knew little about her. In Agra he laid out a splendid capital and sent to Constantinople for a famous architect. Those were the days when Suleiman the Magnificent was building in Constantinople. Sinan was a famous Ottoman architect. Sinan sent his favourite pupil Yusuf to India.

Babar wrote his memoirs and this delightful book gives intimate glimpses of the man. He tells us of Hindustan and of its animals and flowers and trees and fruits—not forgetting the frogs! He sighs for the melons and grapes and flowers of his native country. And he expresses his extreme disappointment at the people. According to him they have not a single good point in their favour. Perhaps he did not get to know them in his four years of war and the more cultured classes kept away from the new conqueror. Perhaps also a new-comer does not easily enter into the life and culture of another people. Any way he found nothing

that was admirable, either in the Afghans who had been the ruling classes for some time, or in the majority of the people. He is a good observer and, even allowing for the partiality of a new-comer, his account shows that North India was in a poor way at the time. He did not visit South India at all.

"The Empire of Hindustan," Babar tells us, "is extensive, populous, and rich. On the east, the south, and even the west, it is bounded by the great ocean. On the north it has Kabul, Ghazni and Kandahar. The capital of all Hindustan is Delhi," It is interesting to note that the whole of India was looked upon as a unit by Babar, although when he came it was split up into many kingdoms. This idea of the unity of India has persevered throughout history.

Babar goes on with his description of India:

> "It is a remarkably fine country. It is quite a different world compared with our countries. Its hills and rivers, its forests and plains, its animals and plants, its inhabitants and their language, its winds and rains, are all of a different nature........ You have no sooner passed Sind than the country, the trees, the stones, the wandering tribes, the manners and customs of the people, are all entirely those of Hindustan. Even the reptiles are different........ The frogs of Hindustan are worthy of notice. Though of the same species as our own, yet they will run six or seven *gaz* on the face of the water."

He then gives lists of the animals, flowers, trees and fruits of Hindustan.

And then we come to the people. "The country of Hindustan has few pleasures to recommend it. The people are not handsome. They have no idea of the charms of friendly society, or of frankly mixing together or of familiar intercourse. They have no genius, no comprehension of mind, no politeness of manner, no kindness or fellow feeling, no ingenuity or mechanical invention in planning or executing their handicraft works, no skill or knowledge in design or architecture; they have no good horses, no good flesh, no grapes or musk-melons, no good fruits, no ice or cold water, no good food, or bread in their bazaars, no baths or colleges,

no candles, no torches, not a candle stick." What *have* they got, one is tempted to ask! Babar must have been thoroughly fed up when he wrote this.

"The chief excellence of Hindustan," says Babar, "is that it is a large country and has abundance of gold and silver. . . . . . Another convenience of Hindustan is that the workmen of every profession and trade are innumerable and without end. For any work and any employment, there is always a set ready, to whom the same employment and trade have descended from father to son for ages."

I have quoted at some length from these memoirs of Babar. Such books often give us a better idea of a man than any description of him.

Babar died in 1530 when he was 49 years of age. There is a well-known story concerning his death. Humayun, his son, was ill, and Babar in his love for him is said to have offered his own life if his son got well. It is said that Humayun recovered and Babar died within a few days of this incident.

They carried Babar's body to Kabul and there they buried it in a garden he loved. He had gone back at last to the flowers he longed for.

89

AKBAR

September 4, 1932

Babar had conquered a great part of north India by his generalship and military efficiency. He had defeated the Afghan Sultan of Delhi, and later, and this was the more difficult task, the Rajput clans under the leadership of the gallant Rana Sanga of Chittor, a famous hero in Rajput history. But he left a difficult task for his son Humayun. Humayun was a cultured and learned person but no soldier like his father. He had trouble all over his new empire and ultimately in 1540, ten years after Babar's death, an Afghan chief in Behar named Sher Khan, defeated and drove him out of India. So the second of the Great Mughals became a wanderer, hiding himself and suffering all manner of privations. It was during these wanderings in the Rajputana desert that his wife gave birth to a son in November 1542. This son, born in the desert, was to become Akbar.

Humayun escaped to Persia and Shah Tamasp, the ruler of the place, gave him shelter. Meanwhile Sher Khan was supreme in north India and for five years he ruled as Sher Shah. Even during this brief period he showed that he was a very capable person. He was a brilliant organiser and his government was active and efficient. In the midst of his wars he found time to start a new and a better land revenue system for assessing taxes on the cultivators. He was a stern and hard man, but of all the Afghan rulers of India, and of many others also, he was certainly the ablest and best. But, as often happens with efficient autocrats, he was all in all in his government, and with his death, the whole structure went to pieces.

Humayun took advantage of this disorganization and returned from Persia in 1556 with an army. He won, and after an interval of sixteen years he was again on the throne of Delhi. But not for long. Six months later he fell down a staircase and died.

It is interesting to contrast the tombs or mausoleums of Sher Shah and Humayun. The Afghan's tomb is at Sahasram in Behar, a stern, strong, imperious looking building, like the man. Humayun's tomb is at Delhi. It is a polished and elegant building. And from these structures of stone one can form a good idea of these two rivals for empire in the sixteenth century.

Akbar was only thirteen years old then. Like his grandfather he came to the throne early. He had a guardian and protector, Bairam Khan—the Khan Baba, he was called. But within four years Akbar wearied of guardianship and other people's direction and took the government in his own hands.

For nearly fifty years Akbar ruled India, from early in 1556 to the end of 1605. This was the period of the revolt of the Netherlands in Europe, and of Shakespeare in England. Akbar's name stands out in Indian history and sometimes, and in some ways, he reminds one of Ashoka. It is a strange thing that a Buddhist emperor of India of the third century before Christ, and a Muslim emperor of India of the sixteenth century after Christ, should speak in the same manner and almost in the same voice. One wonders if this is not perhaps the voice of India herself speaking through two of her great sons. Of Ashoka we know little enough, except what he has himself left carved in stone. Of Akbar we know a great deal. Two contemporary historians of his court have left long accounts, and the foreigners who visited him, and especially the Jesuits who tried hard to convert him to Christianity, have written at length.

He was the third in the line from Babar. But the Mughals were still new to the country. They were regarded as foreigners and their hold was military. It was Akbar's reign that established the Mughal dynasty

and made it of the soil and wholly Indian in outlook. It was in his reign that the title of Great Mughal came to be used in Europe. He was very autocratic and had uncontrolled power. There seems to have been no whisper in India then of checking a ruler's powers. As it happened, Akbar was a wise despot and he worked hard for the welfare of the Indian people. In a sense he might be considered to be the father of Indian nationalism. At a time when there was little of nationality in the country and religion was a dividing factor, Akbar deliberately placed the ideal of a common Indian nationhood above the claims of separatist religion. He did not wholly succeed in his attempt. But it is amazing how far he did go and what great success attended his efforts.

And yet Akbar's success, such as it was, was not due entirely to his unaided self. No man can succeed in great tasks unless the time is ripe and the atmosphere is favourable. A great man often forces the pace and creates his own atmosphere. But the great man himself is a product of the times and of the prevailing atmosphere. So Akbar also was the product of the times in India.

In a previous letter I told you how silent forces in India worked for the synthesis of the two cultures and religions that had been thrown together in this country. I told you of new styles of architecture and of the growth of the Indian languages, and especially Urdu or Hindustani. And I also told you of reformers and religious leaders, like Ramananda and Kabir and Guru Nanak, who sought to bring Islam and Hinduism nearer to each other by laying stress on the common features and attacking their rites and ceremonials. This spirit of synthesis was abroad, and Akbar, with his finely sensitive and receptive mind, must have absorbed it and reacted to it greatly. Indeed he became its chief exponent.

Even as a statesman he must have come to the conclusion that his strength, and the nation's strength,

would lie in this synthesis. He was a brave enough fighter and an able general. He was, unlike Ashoka, never averse to fighting. But he preferred the gains of affection to the gains of the sword and he knew that they would be more enduring. So he set himself out deliberately to win the good will of the Hindu nobles and the Hindu masses. He abolished the *jizya* poll tax on non-Muslims and the tax on Hindu pilgrims. He married himself a girl of a noble Rajput family; later he married his son to a Rajput girl also; and he encouraged such mixed marriages. He appointed Rajput nobles to the highest posts in his empire. Several of his bravest generals and most capable ministers and governors were Hindus. Raja Man Singh was even sent for a while as governor to Kabul. Indeed, in his attempts to conciliate the Rajputs and the Hindu masses, he went to such lengths that he was occasionally unjust to his Muslim subjects. He succeeded however in winning the goodwill of the Hindus, and the Rajputs flocked to serve him and do him honour—nearly all, except one unbending figure, Rana Pratap Singh of Mewar. Rana Pratap refused to acknowledge Akbar's suzerainty, even nominally. Beaten in battle, he preferred to live a hunted life in the jungle to pampered ease as Akbar's vassal. All his life this proud Rajput fought the great Emperor of Delhi and refused to bow down to him. Towards the end of his days he even met with some success. The memory of this gallant Rajput is treasured in Rajputana and many a legend has grown round his name.

So Akbar won the Rajputs and became very popular with the masses. He was indulgent to the Parsees and even to the Jesuit missionaries who came to his court. But this indulgence and a certain disregard of Muslim observances made him unpopular with the Muslim nobles and there were several revolts against him.

I have compared him to Ashoka but do not be misled by this comparison. In many ways he was unlike him. He was very ambitious and to the end of his

days he was a conqueror, intent on extending his empire. The Jesuits tell us that he

> "possessed an alert and discerning mind; he was a man of sound judgment, prudent in affairs, and above all, kind, affable, and generous. With these qualities he combined the courage of those who undertake and carry out great enterprises............ He was interested in, and curious to learn about many things, and possessed an intimate knowledge not only of military and political matters, but of many of the mechanical arts........the light of clemency and mildness shone forth from this prince, even upon those who offended against his own person. He seldom lost his temper. If he did so, he fell into a violent passion; but his wrath was never of long duration."

Remember that this description is not by a courtier, but by a stranger from another land who had plenty of opportunities to observe Akbar.

Physically, Akbar was extraordinarily strong and active, and he loved nothing better than hunting wild and dangerous animals. As a soldier he was brave to the point of recklessness. His amazing energy can be judged from a famous march of his from Agra to Ahmedabad in nine days. A revolt had broken out in Gujrat and Akbar rushed with a little army across the desert of Rajputana, a distance of four hundred and fifty miles. It was an extraordinary feat. There were no railways or motor cars then, I need hardly remind you.

But great men have something besides all these qualities; they have, it is said, a magnetism which draws people to them. Akbar had this personal magnetism and charm in abundant measure; his compelling eyes were, in the wonderful description of the Jesuits, "vibrant like the sea in sunshine." Is it any wonder that this man should fascinate us still, and his most royal and manly figure should tower high above the crowds of men who have been but kings?

As a conqueror, Akbar triumphed all over north India and even the South. He added Gujrat, Bengal, Orissa, Kashmir and Sind to his Empire. He was victorious in Central India and South India also and took tribute. His defeat of Rani Durgavati, a ruler in the

Central Provinces, does him little credit. The Rani was a brave and good ruler and she did him no harm. But ambition and the desire for empire care little for such obstacles. In South India his armies fought another woman ruler, the famous Chand Bibi, regent of Ahmednagar. This lady had courage and ability and the fight she put up impressed the Mughal army so much that they granted her a favourable peace. Unfortunately she was killed later by some discontented soldiers of her own.

Akbar's armies also laid siege to Chittor—this was before Rana Pratap's time. Chittor was defended very gallantly by Jaimal. On his death there was the terrible *jauhar* ceremony again, and Chittor fell.

Akbar managed to gather round himself many efficient lieutenants who were devoted to him. Chief among these were the two brothers, Faizi and Abul Fazl, and Birbal, about whom innumerable stories are still told. Todar Mal was his finance minister. It was he who revised the whole revenue system. In those days, you may be interested to know, there was no zamindari system and no zamindars or taluqadars. The state settled with the individual cultivators or ryots. It is what is called now the ryot-wari system. Present day zamindars are the creation of the British.

Raja Man Singh of Jaipur was one of Akbar's best generals. Another famous person in Akbar's court was Tansen, the great singer, who has become the patron saint of all singers in India.

Akbar's capital was at Agra to begin with and he built the fort there. Then he built a new city at Fatehpur-Sikri, which is about 15 miles from Agra. He chose this site as a saintly person, Shaikh Salim Chishti, lived there. Here he built a splendid city, "much greater than London" according to an English traveller of the day, and for over fifteen years this was the capital of his empire. Later he made Lahore his capital. "His Majesty," says Abul-Fazl, the friend and minister of Akbar, "plans splendid edifices, and dresses the work of his mind and heart in the garment of stone and clay."

Fatehpur-Sikri still stands with its beautiful mosque and great *Buland Darwāza* and many other fine buildings. It is a deserted city and there is no life in it; but through its streets and across its wide courts, the ghosts of a dead empire still seem to pass.

Our present city of Allahabad was also founded by Akbar, but of course the site is a most ancient one and Prayaga has flourished there since the days of the Ramayana. The fort at Allahabad was built by Akbar.

It must have been a busy life of conquest and consolidation of a vast empire. But right through it one can see another of Akbar's remarkable traits. This was his boundless curiosity and his search for truth. Whoever could throw light on any subject was sent for and questioned. The men of different religions gathered round him, in the *Ibādat Khāna*, each hoping to convert this mighty monarch. They quarrelled with each other often, and Akbar sat by listening to their arguments and putting many questions to them. He seems to have been convinced that truth was no monopoly of any religion and sect and he proclaimed that his avowed principle was one of universal toleration in religion.

A historian of his reign, Badauni, who must have participated in many of these gatherings himself, gives an interesting account of Akbar, which I shall quote. Badauni himself was an orthodox Muslim and he thoroughly disapproved of these activities of Akbar. "His Majesty", he says, "collected the opinions of everyone, especially of such as were not Muslims, retaining whatever he approved of, and rejecting everything which was against his disposition and ran counter to his wishes. From his earliest childhood to his manhood, and from his manhood to old age, his Majesty has passed through the most various phases, and through all sorts of religious practices and sectarian beliefs, and has collected everything which people can find in books, with a talent of selection peculiar to him, and a spirit of enquiry opposed to every (Islamic) principle. Thus a faith based on some elementary principles traced itself on the

mirror of his heart, and as a result of all the influences brought to bear on his Majesty, there grew, gradually as the outline on a stone, the conviction in his heart that there were sensible men in all religions, and abstemious thinkers, and men endowed with miraculous powers, among all nations. If some true knowledge was thus everywhere to be found, why should truth be confined to one religion? . . . ."

At this time, you will remember, there was the most extraordinary intolerance in Europe in matters of religion. The Inquisition flourished in Spain and the Netherlands and elsewhere, and both Catholic and Calvinist thought tolerance of the other a deadly sin.

Year after year Akbar continued his religious talks and arguments with the professors of all faiths, till these professors got rather tired of it and gave up hope of converting him to their particular faith. When each faith had something of the truth how could he fix upon one? "For the Gentiles," he is reported by the Jesuits to have remarked, "regard their law as good; and so likewise do the Saracens and the Christians. To which then shall we give our adherence?" (By the Gentiles, the Jesuits meant the Hindus, and the Saracens referred of course to the Muslims. The Jesuit fathers, being Portuguese, knew the Saracens of Spain and called the Indian Muslims by the same name). Akbar's question was a very pertinent one but it annoyed the Jesuits who say, in their book, that "thus we see in this Prince the common fault of the atheist, who refuses to make reason subservient to faith, and, accepting nothing as true which his feeble mind is unable to fathom, is content to submit to his own imperfect judgment matters transcending the highest limits of human understanding." If this is the definition of an atheist the more we have of them the better!

What Akbar was aiming at, it is not clear. Did he look upon the question purely as a political one? In his desire to evolve a common nationality did he want to force the different religions into one channel? Or

was he religious in his motives and his quest? I do not know. But I am inclined to think that he was more of a statesman than a religious reformer. Whatever his object may have been, he actually proclaimed a new religion—the *Din Ilahi*—of which he himself was the head. In religion, as in other matters, his autocracy was to be unchallenged, and there was a lot of disgusting prostration and kissing the feet and the like. The new religion did not catch. All it did was to irritate the Muslims.

Akbar was the very essence of authoritarianism. And yet it is interesting to speculate what his reaction to politically liberal ideas might have been. If there was to be liberty of conscience why not greater political freedom for the people? To science he would certainly have been greatly attracted. Unhappily these ideas, which were beginning to trouble some people in Europe then, were not current in India at the time. Nor does there seem to have been any use of the printing press, and education was thus very limited. Indeed you will be amazed to learn that Akbar was practically an illiterate, that is he could not read or write! But nonetheless he was highly educated and was very fond of having books read to him. Under his orders many Sanskrit books were translated into Persian.

It is interesting to note that he issued orders forbidding the practice of *Sati* by Hindu widows, and also the practice of making prisoners of wars slaves.

Akbar died in October 1605 in his sixty-fourth year after a reign of nearly fifty years. He lies buried in a beautiful mausoleum at Sikandra, near Agra.

This letter has become tremendously long. It is the fault of the quotations I give. But one thing more I must tell you. In Akbar's reign there flourished in north India—mostly in Benares—a man whose name is known to every villager in the United Provinces. He is far better known there and is more popular than Akbar or any king can be. I refer to Tulsi Das who wrote the *Rāmacharitmanas* or the *Rāmāyana* in Hindi.

90

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE MUGHAL EMPIRE IN INDIA

September 9, 1932

I feel tempted to tell you something more of Akbar, but I must restrain myself. I cannot, however, resist giving you some more quotations from the accounts of the Portuguese missionaries. Their opinions are of far greater value than those of courtiers, and it is well to remember that they were greatly disappointed in Akbar because he did not become a Christian. Still they say that "indeed he was a great king; for he knew that the good ruler is he who can command, simultaneously, the obedience, the respect, the love and the fear of his subjects. He was a prince beloved of all, firm with the great, kind to those of low estate, and just to all men, high and low, neighbour or stranger, Christian, Saracen or Gentile; so that every man believed that the king was on his side." "At one time," the Jesuits further tell us, "he would be deeply immersed in state affairs, or giving audience to his subjects, and the next moment he would be seen shearing camels, hewing stones, cutting wood, or hammering iron, and doing all with as much diligence as though engaged in his own particular vocation." Powerful and autocratic monarch though he was, he did not think manual labour beneath his dignity, as some people seem to think to-day.

We are further told that "he ate sparingly, taking flesh only three or four months in the year.......... With great difficulty he spared three hours of the night for sleep.......... He had a wonderful memory. He knew the names of all his elephants, though he had many thousands of them, also the names of his horses,

deer and even pigeons!" This amazing memory seems hardly credible and there may be some exaggeration in the account. But that he had a wonderful mind there can be no doubt. "Though he could neither read nor write, he knew everything that took place in his kingdom." And "his eagerness for knowledge" was such that he "tried to learn everything at once, like a hungry man trying to swallow his food at a single gulp."

Such was Akbar. But he was the complete autocrat, and although he gave a large measure of security to the people, and reduced the burden of taxation on the peasantry, his mind was not directed to raising the general level by education and training. It was the age of autocracy everywhere, and compared to other autocratic monarchs he shines brilliantly as a king and a man.

Although third in the line from Babar, Akbar was the real founder of the Mughal dynasty in India. Like Kublai Khan's Yuan dynasty in China, the Mughal rulers become, from Akbar onwards, an Indian dynasty. And because of the great work that Akbar had done in consolidating his empire, his dynasty endured for over a hundred years after his death.

There were three able rulers after Akbar, but there was nothing extraordinary about them. Whenever an emperor died, there was an unseemly scramble among his sons for the throne. There were palace intrigues and wars of succession, and revolts of sons against fathers, and brothers against brothers, and murders and blinding of relatives—all the revolting accompaniments of autocracy and absolute rule. There was pomp and splendour, unequalled anywhere. This was the time, you will remember, when Louis XIV, the Roi Soleil, flourished in France and built Versailles and held a magnificent court. But the Roi Soleil's magnificence paled before the magnificence of the Grand Mughal. Probably these Mughal rulers were the richest sovereigns of the age. And yet famine came sometimes and pestilence and disease and wiped off vast numbers, while the imperial court lived

in luxury.

The toleration of religions of Akbar's time continued in his son Jahangir's reign, but then it faded away and there was some persecution of Christians and Hindus. Later on, in the reign of Aurangzeb, there was a determined attempt to persecute Hindus by destruction of temples and a re-imposition of the hated *jizya* poll tax. So the foundations of the Empire, which Akbar had laboriously laid, were removed one by one, and suddenly the Empire tottered and fell.

Akbar was succeeded by Jahangir, his son by a Rajput wife. He carried on to some extent his father's traditions, but he was probably more interested in art and painting, and gardens and flowers, than in government. He had a fine art gallery. Every year he went to Kashmir and, I think, it was he who laid out the famous gardens near Srinagar—the Shalamar and Nishat Baghs. Jahangir's wife, or rather one of his many wives, was the beautiful Nur Jahan, who was the real power behind the throne. It was in Jahangir's reign that the beautiful building containing the tomb of Itmad-ud-Daula was built. Always, when I go to Agra, I try to visit this gem of architecture to feast my eyes on its beauty.

After Jahangir came his son Shah Jahan who ruled for thirty years (1628—58). In his reign—he was the contemporary of Louis XIV of France—came the climax of Mughal splendour, and in his reign also are clearly visible the seeds of decay. The famous Peacock Throne, covered with expensive jewels, was made for the king to sit on. And in his reign also, was made the Taj Mahal, that dream of beauty by the side of the Jumna at Agra. This is, as perhaps you know, the tomb of the wife he loved, Mumtaz Mahal. Shah Jahan did much that does him no credit or honour. He was intolerant in religion, and he did next to nothing to give relief to the Dekhan and Gujrat when a terrible famine raged there. His wealth and magnificence appear most odious when contrasted with this misery and poverty of his

people. And yet much, perhaps, may be forgiven him for the marvels of loveliness in stone and marble that he has left behind. It was in his time that Mughal architecture reached its height. Besides the Taj, he built the Moti Masjid—the Pearl Mosque in Agra; and the great Jami Masjid of Delhi, and the *Dīwān-i-ām* and *Dīwān-i-khās* in the palace in Delhi. These are buildings of a noble simplicity; some of them enormous and yet graceful and elegant, and fairy-like in their beauty.

But behind this fairy-like beauty was the growing misery of the people, who paid for the palaces, though many did not even have mud huts to live in. There was unrestrained despotism and fierce punishments were given to those who happened to displease the Emperor or his great viceroys and governors. The principles of Machiavelli governed the intrigues of the court. Akbar's clemency and toleration and good government was a thing of the past. Affairs were heading for trouble.

Then came Aurangzeb, the last of the Great Mughals. He started off his reign by imprisoning his old father. For 48 years he reigned from 1659 to 1707. He was no lover of art or literature, like his grandfather Jahangir, or of architecture like his father, Shah Jahan. He was an austere puritan, a bigot, tolerating no religion but his own. The pomp of the court continued, but in his personal life. Aurangzeb was simple and almost an ascetic. Deliberately he laid down a policy of persecuting the Hindu religion. Deliberately he reversed Akbar's policy of conciliation and synthesis, and thus removed the whole foundation on which the Empire had so far rested. He re-imposed the *jizya* tax on Hindus; he excluded Hindus from office as far as possible; he gave offence to the Rajput nobles, who had supported the dynasty since Akbar's time, and brought on a Rajput war; he destroyed Hindu temples by the thousand, and many a beautiful old building of the past was thus reduced to dust. And while his empire spread in the

South, and Bijapur and Golkonda fell to him, and tribute came to him from the far south, its foundations were sapped and it grew weaker and weaker, and enemies grew on every side. A Hindu petition to him against the *jizya* tax stated that the tribute "is repugnant to justice; it is equally foreign from good policy, as it must impoverish the country; moreover, it is an innovation and an infringement of the laws of Hindustan." Referring to the conditions prevailing in the empire, it said: "During your Majesty's reign, many have been alienated from the Empire and further loss of territory must necessarily follow, since devastation and rapine now universally prevail without restraint. Your subjects are trampled under foot, and every province of your empire is impoverished, depopulation spreads, and difficulties accumulate.'

It was this general misery that was the prelude to the great changes that were to come over India during the next fifty years or so. Among these changes was the sudden and complete collapse of the great Mughal Empire after the death of Aurangzeb. Great changes and great movements almost always have economic causes at their back, and we have seen the fall of great empires in Europe and China heralded and accompanied by economic collapse and subsequent revolution. So also in India.

The Mughal Empire fell, as almost all empires fall, because of its own inherent weakness. It literally went to pieces. But this process was greatly helped by a new consciousness of revolt among the Hindus, which was brought to a head by Aurangzeb's policy. But this religious Hindu nationalism of a kind had its roots even earlier than Aurangzeb's reign and, it may be, that it was partly because of this that Aurangzeb became so bitter and intolerant. The Marathas and Sikhs and others were the spear-heads of this Hindu revival and the Mughal Empire was finally overthrown by them, as we shall see in the next letter. But they were not to profit by this rich inheritance. The British, quietly

and cleverly, were to step in and take possession of the booty while others fought each other for it.

It may interest you to know what the royal camp of the Mughal Emperors was like when they set out with an army. It was a tremendous affair with a circumference of thirty miles and a population of half a million! This population included the army accompanying the Emperor, but there were vast numbers of other people, and hundreds of bazaars in this huge city on the march. It was in these moving camps that Urdu—the "camp" language—developed.

There are many portraits of Mughal times still existing, fine and delicate paintings. There is a regular gallery of the portraits of the emperors. They bring out wonderfully the personality of these men from Babar to Aurangzeb.

The Mughal Emperors used to display themselves at least twice a day from a balcony to the people and receive petitions. When the present English King George V came to India for the coronation durbar at Delhi in 1911 he was made to display himself in a like manner. The British consider themselves the successors of the Mughals to the dominion of India and try to ape them in pomp and vulgar display. As I have told you the English King has even been given the title of the Mughal rulers—the Kaiser-i-Hind. Even now, probably there is nowhere in the world so much pomp and pageantry as there is round the person of the English Viceroy in India.

I have not told you yet of the relations of the later Mughals with foreigners. In Akbar's court the Portuguese missionaries were great favourites and Akbar's contacts with the European world were mainly through the Portuguese. To him they appeared to be the most powerful of European nations and they controlled the seas. The English were not in evidence. Akbar coveted Goa and even attacked it, but without success. The Mughals did not take to the sea kindly and were power-

less before a naval power. This is curious as there was much ship building in east Bengal at the time. But these ships were mostly meant for carrying merchandise. One of the reasons for the fall of the Mughal Empire is said to have been this powerlessness at sea. The day of the naval powers had come.

When the English tried to come to the Mughal court, the Portuguese were jealous of them and tried their best to prejudice Jahangir against them. But Sir Thomas Roe, an ambassador of James I of England managed to reach Jahangir's court in 1615 and he gained concessions from the emperor and laid the foundations of the East India Company's trade. Meanwhile the English fleet had defeated Portuguese ships in Indian seas. The star of England was slowly rising over the horizon; Portugal was fading away in the west. The Dutch and the English gradually drove the Portuguese from eastern waters, and, you will remember, even the great port of Malacca fell to the Dutch in 1641. In 1629 there was war between Shah Jahan and the Portuguese in Hugli. The Portuguese were carrying on a regular slave trade and were making forcible conversions to Christianity. Hugli was captured by the Mughals after a gallant defence. The little country of Portugal was exhausted by these repeated wars. It retired from the contest for empire, but it clung on to Goa and a few other places, and there she is still.

The English meanwhile started factories in the Indian coast towns, near Madras and Surat. Madras itself was founded by them in 1639. In 1662 Charles II of England married Catherine of Braganza of Portugal and he got the island of Bombay as dowry. A little later he gave this for a trifle to the East India Company. This took place during Aurangzeb's reign. The East India Company, proud of having driven away the Portuguese and thinking that the Mughal Empire was weakening, tried to increase its possessions in India by force in 1685. But they came to grief. Warships came all the way from England and attacks were made on

Aurangzeb's dominions both in the east in Bengal and in the west in Surat. But the Mughals were still strong enough to defeat them severely. The English learnt a lesson from this and were much more careful in future. Even on Aurangzeb's death, when the Mughal power was obviously going to pieces, they hesitated for many years before venturing on big enterprises. In 1690 one of them, Job Charnock, founded the city of Calcutta. Thus the three cities of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta were founded by Englishmen and they grew up, to begin with, largely with British enterprise.

France also now appears in India. A French trading company is formed and in 1668 they start a factory at Surat, and some at other places. A few years later they buy the town of Pondicherry which becomes the most important commercial port on the east coast.

In 1707 Aurangzeb dies at the great age of nearly ninety. The stage is set for the struggle to possess the magnificent prize left by him—India. There are his own incompetent descendants and some of his great governors; there are the Marathas and Sikhs; and men looking covetously from across the north west frontier; and the two foreign nations from across the seas—the English and the French. And what of the poor people of India!

91

THE SIKHS AND THE MARATHAS

September 12, 1932

A strange patchwork was India during the hundred years following Aurangzeb's death, a kaleidoscope, ever changing, but not very beautiful to look at. Such a period is an ideal one for adventurers and those who are bold and unscrupulous enough to seize opportunities without caring for the means or methods adopted. So adventurers rose all over India, adventurers who were native to the soil, and those who came across the north-west frontier, and those, like the English and French, who came across the seas. Each man or group played his or its own hand and was prepared to send all the others to the devil; sometimes two or more combined to crush a third, only, later, to fall out among themselves. There were frantic attempts to carve out kingdoms and to get rich quick, and plunder, often undisguised and unashamed, sometimes under a thin disguise of trade. And behind all this the vanishing Mughal Empire, disappearing like the Cheshire cat, till not even the smile remained, and the so-called Emperor was an unhappy pensioner or prisoner of others.

But all this upheaval and turmoil, and turning and twisting, were the outward indications of a revolution going on below the surface. The old economic order was breaking up; feudalism had had its day and was collapsing. It was not in keeping with the new conditions in the country. We have seen this process in Europe, and we have seen the merchant classes rise, only to be checked by absolute monarchs. Only in England, and to some extent in Holland, were the monarchs subdued. When Aurangzeb came to the throne, England

was under the shortlived republic, which followed the execution of Charles I. And it was during Aurangzeb's reign also that the British revolution was completed by the running away of James II and the victory of Parliament in 1688. The fact that England had a semi-popular council like Parliament helped greatly in the struggle. There was something which could be set up against the feudal nobles and, later, the king.

In most other countries of Europe conditions were different. In France there was still the Grand Monarque, Louis XIV, who was a contemporary of Aurangzeb, right through his long reign, and who survived him by eight years. Absolute rule continued there till almost the end of the eighteenth century when there was a famous and a tremendous burst-up—the great French Revolution. In Germany, as we saw, the seventeenth century was a terrible period. It was during this century that the Thirty Years' War took place, which broke up the country and ruined it.

Conditions in India in the eighteenth century were, to some extent, comparable to the Thirty Years' War period of Germany. But do not drive the comparison too far. In both the countries there was an economic break-down and the old feudal class was out of place. Although feudalism was collapsing in India, it did not disappear for a long time. And even when it had practically disappeared its outward form continued. Indeed, even to-day, there are many relics of feudalism in India and in some parts of Europe.

The Mughal Empire broke up because of these economic changes, but there was no middle class ready to take advantage of this break-up and seize power. There was also no organisation or council representing these classes, as there had been in England. Too much despotic rule had made the people generally rather servile, and the old ideas of freedom, such as they were, were almost forgotten. Yet, as we shall see later, in this very letter, there were attempts, partly feudal, partly bourgeois and partly peasant, to seize power, and some of these

attempts came near success. The main thing to note, however, is that there seems to have been a gap between the fall of feudalism and the rise of the middle class, sufficiently prepared to assume power. When there is such a gap there is trouble and turmoil, as there was in Germany. So it happened in India. Petty kings and princes fight for mastery in the country, but they are representatives of a decaying order, and have no secure foundations. They come up against a new class of persons, the representatives of the British bourgeoisie, which had recently triumphed in its own country. This British middle class represents a higher social order than the feudal, it is in keeping with the new conditions developing in the world; it is better organised and is more efficient; it has better tools and weapons and can thus wage war more effectively; and it has the command of the sea. The feudal princes of India cannot possibly compete with this new power, and, one by one, they go down before it.

This is a long enough prelude to this letter. We must now go back a little. I have referred in my last letter and in this to popular risings and to a religious Hindu nationalistic revival during the later days of Aurangzeb's reign. We must now say something more about this. We find quite a number of semi-religious popular movements growing up in various parts of the Mughal Empire. They are peaceful movements for a time, having little to do with politics. Songs and religious hymns are written in the languages of the country, in Hindi, Marathi, Punjabi, and become popular. These songs and hymns raise mass consciousness. Religious sects are formed round popular preachers. Pressure of economic circumstances gradually turns these sects to political questions; there is friction with the ruling authority—the Mughal Empire; then there is repression of the sect. This repression converts the peaceful religious sect into a military brotherhood. This was the development of the Sikhs, and of many other sects. The Marathas have a more complicated history, but,

essentially, there also we find a mixture of religion and nationalism taking to arms against the Mughals. The Mughal Empire was not overthrown by the British, but by these religious-nationalist movements, and especially by the Marathas. These movements naturally gained strength by Aurangzeb's policy of intolerance. It is also quite possible that Aurangzeb became more bitter and intolerant because of this rising religious consciousness against his rule.

As early as 1669 the Jat peasants of Mathura rose in rebellion. They were suppressed repeatedly, but they rose again and again for over thirty years, till Aurungzeb's death. Remember that Mathura is quite near Agra, and these rebellions were thus taking place near the capital. Another rebellion was that of the Satnamis, a Hindu sect consisting mainly of common folk. This was also thus a poor people's rising, and was quite different from the revolts of nobles and governors and the like. A Mughal noble of the time describes them in disgust as "a gang of bloody miserable rebels, goldsmiths, carpenters, sweepers, tanners, and other ignoble beings." In his opinion it must have been a scandalous thing for such "ignoble persons" to rise against their superiors.

We now come to the Sikhs, and we must trace their history from an earlier period. You will remember my telling you of Gurū Nanak. He died soon after Babar came to India. He was one of those who tried to find a common platform between Hinduism and Islam. He was succeeded by three other *gurūs,* who, like him, were perfectly peaceful and were interested in religious matters only. Akbar gave the site of the tank and the golden temple at Amritsar to the fourth *gurū.* Since then Amritsar has become the headquarters of Sikhism.

Then came the fifth *gurū,* Arjun Singh, who compiled the Granth, which is a collection of sayings and hymns, and is the sacred book of the Sikhs. For a political offence Jahangir had Arjun Singh tortured to death. This was the turning point in the career of the Sikhs. The unjust and cruel treatment of their *gurū*

filled them with resentment and turned their minds to arms. Under their sixth *gurū*, Hargovind, they became a military brotherhood, and from that time onwards they were often in conflict with the ruling power. Gurū Hargovind was himself imprisoned for ten years by Jahangir. The ninth *gurū* was Tegh Bahadur. He lived in Aurangzeb's reign. He was ordered by Aurangzeb to embrace Islam and on his refusal, he was executed. The tenth and the last *gurū* was Govind Singh. He made the Sikhs into a powerful military community, mainly to oppose the Delhi Emperor. He died a year after Aurangzeb. There has been no *gurū* since then. It is said that the powers of the *gurū* now rest in the whole Sikh community, the "Khalsa", or the "chosen", as it is called.

Soon after Aurangzeb's death there was a Sikh rebellion. This was put down, but the Sikhs continued to grow in strength and to consolidate themselves in the Punjab. Later, at the end of the century, a Sikh State was to emerge in the Punjab under Ranjit Singh.

Troublesome as all these rebellions were, the real danger to the Mughal Empire came from the rising power of the Marathas in the south-west. Even in Shah Jahan's reign, a Maratha chieftain, Shahji Bhonsla, gave trouble. He was an officer of the Ahmednagar State, and later of Bijapur. But it was his son, Shivaji, born in 1627, who became the glory of the Marathas and the terror of the Empire. When only a boy of nineteen he started on his predatory career and captured his first fort near Poona. He was a gallant captain, an ideal guerilla leader and adventurer, and he built up a band of brave and hardened mountaineers, who were devoted to him. With their help he captured many forts. With his enemies he was prepared to adopt any means, good or bad, provided that he gained his end. He killed a general sent against him by Bijapur by treachery. He gave Aurangzeb's commanders a bad time. In 1665 he suddenly appeared at Surat, where there was the English factory, and sacked the city. He was induced

to visit Aurangzeb's court at Agra, but he felt humiliated and insulted by not being treated as an independent prince. He was kept a prisoner, but escaped. Even then Aurangzeb tried to win him by giving him the title of raja.

But soon Shivaji was on the war path again and the Mughal officers in the south were so terrified of him that they paid him money for protection. This was the famous *chauth* or fourth part of the revenue which the Marathas claimed wherever they went. So the Maratha power went on increasing and the Delhi Empire weakening. In 1674 Shivaji had himself crowned with great ceremony at Raigarh. His victories continued to his death in 1680.

You have been living at Poona, in the heart of the Maratha country, for some time now, and you must know how Shivaji is loved and adored by the people there. He represented a religious-nationalist revival of the kind I have already mentioned. The economic breakdown and general misery of the people prepared the soil; and two great Marathi poets, Ramdas and Tukaram, nurtured this soil by their poetry and hymns. The Maratha people thus gained in consciousness and unity, and just then came a brilliant captain to lead them to victory. Some of Shivaji's deeds, like the treacherous killing of the Bijapur general, lower him greatly in our estimation. But it seems that in all his warfare he was careful to avoid attack or injury to the common people, to women, to mosques and the like.

Shivaji's son, Sambhaji, was tortured and killed by the Mughals, but the Marathas after some set-backs continued to grow in strength. With the death of Aurangzeb his great empire began to vanish into air. Various governors became independent of headquarters. Bengal fell away. So did Oudh and Rohilkhand. In the South the Vazir Asaf Jah founded a kingdom, the modern Hyderabad State. The present Nizam is a descendant of Asaf Jah. Within seventeen years of Aurangzeb's death the Empire had almost disappeared. But in Delhi

or Agra there was a succession of nominal emperors without an empire.

As the Empire weakens, the Marathas grow stronger. Their prime minister, called the Peshwa, becomes the real power, overshadowing the Raja. The office of Peshwas becomes hereditary, like that of the Shogun in Japan, and the Raja sinks into the background. The Delhi Emperor in his weakness recognises the right of the Marathas to collect their *chauth* tax all over the Dekhan. Not content with this the Peshwa conquers Gujrat, Malwa and Central India. His troops appear at the very gates of Delhi in 1737. The Marathas seemed to be destined for the overlordship of India. They dominated the land. But suddenly, in 1739, there was an intrusion from the north-west, which upset the balance of power and changed the face of north India.

This letter is long enough and I must end it. I have dealt at greater length than I intended to with this period of India's history. I am afraid I must continue it in the next letter.

92

THE ENGLISH TRIUMPH OVER THEIR RIVALS IN INDIA

September 13, 1932

We have seen that the Delhi Empire was in a pretty bad way. Indeed, one could almost say that, as an empire, it was in no way at all. Yet Delhi and north India were to sink much lower still. As I have told you, it was the day of adventurers in India. A prince of adventurers suddenly swooped down from the north-west, and after much killing and plundering, walked off with enormous treasure. This was Nadir Shah, who had made himself the ruler of Persia. He took away with him the famous peacock throne which Shah Jahan had got made. This terrible visitation took place in 1739, and north India was prostrate. Nadir Shah brought his dominions right up to the Indus. Thus Afghanistan was cut off from India. From the days of the Mahabharata and Gandhara, right through Indian history, Afghanistan was intimately connected with India. It now cuts adrift.

Delhi saw yet another invader and plunderer within seventeen years. This was Ahmad Shah Durrani, who had succeeded Nadir Shah in Afghanistan. Yet in spite of these invasions, Maratha power continued to spread, and in 1758 the Punjab was under them. They did not attempt to organize a government over all this territory. They realized their famous *chauth* tax and left the ruling to the local people. Thus they had practically inherited the Delhi Empire. But then came a great check. Durrani came down again from the north-west and, in alliance with others, defeated utterly a great host of the Marathas at the old battlefield of

Panipat in 1761. Durrani was then the master of the north of India and there was no power to check him. But in the moment of his triumph he had to face trouble and revolt among his own people and he returned home.

For a while the Marathas seemed to have ended their days of domination and ceased to count for much. They had lost the great prize they sought after. But they recovered gradually and again became the most formidable internal power in India. Meanwhile, however, as we shall see, other and even more powerful forces had come into play, and the fate of India was being decided for a few generations. About this time there arose several Maratha chieftains who were supposed to be dependents of the Peshwa. Most prominent of these was Scindia of Gwalior; there were also the Gaekwar of Baroda and Holkar of Indore.

Now we must consider the other events I have referred to above. The dominating fact of this period in South India is the struggle between the English and the French. Often during the eighteenth century England and France were at war in Europe and their representatives fought each other in India. But sometimes the two fought in India even when their countries were officially at peace. On both sides there were bold and unscrupulous adventurers, over eager to gain wealth and power, and there was naturally intense rivalry between them. On the French side the most prominent man in these days was Dupleix; on the English, Clive. Dupleix started the profitable game of taking part in local disputes between two States, hiring out his trained troops, and grabbing afterwards. French influence increased; but the English followed his methods soon enough and improved upon them. Both sides, like hungry vultures, looked for trouble, and there was enough of this to be found. Whenever there was a disputed succession in the South, you would probably find the English supporting one claimant, and the French another. England won against France after fifteen

years of struggle (1746—1761). The English adventurers in India received full support from their home country; Dupleix and his colleagues had no such help from France. This is not surprising. Behind the English in India were the British merchants and others holding shares in the East India Company and they could influence Parliament and the government; behind the French was King Louis XV (grandson and successor of the Grand Monarque Louis XIV), heading merrily for disaster. The British mastery of the sea also greatly helped. Both the French and the British trained Indian troops, sepoys they were called, from *sipāhī*, and as they were better armed and disciplined than the local armies, their services were in great demand.

So the English defeated the French in India and they destroyed completely the French cities of Chandarnagore and Pondicherry. Such was the destruction that not a roof is said to have been left in either place. The French pass away from the Indian scene from this time onwards. They got back Pondicherry and Chandarnagore later, and they still hold them to this day, but they have no importance.

India was not the only battleground of the English and French at this period. Besides Europe, they fought each other in Canada and elsewhere. In Canada also the English won. Soon after, however, the English lost the American colonies, and the French revenged themselves against the British by helping these colonies. But of all this we shall have much more to say in a later letter.

Having got rid of the French, what further obstacles did the English have in their way? There were of course the Marathas in west and in Central India and even to some extent in the north. There was the Nizam of Hyderabad but he did not count for much. And there was a new and powerful opponent in the South, Haider Ali. He had made himself master of the remnants of the old Vijayanagar Empire, which correspond

to the present Mysore State. In the north, Bengal was under Siraj-ud-Daula, a thoroughly incompetent individual. The Delhi Empire, as we have seen, existed in imagination only. Yet, curiously enough, the English continued to send humble presents in token of submission, to the Delhi Empire till 1756, that is, till long after Nadir Shah's raid, which had put an end even to the shadow of the central government. You will remember that the English in Bengal ventured to take the offensive once in Aurungzeb's time. But they were badly defeated, and the defeat sobered them so much that they hesitated for long before venturing out again, although conditions in the north were an open invitation to any resolute person.

Clive, the Englishman who is so much admired by his countrymen as a great empire-builder, was such a resolute person. In his person and in his deeds he illustrates how empires are built up. He was daring and adventurous and extraordinarily covetous, and his resolution did not falter before forgery or falsehood. Siraj-ud-Daula, the Nawab of Bengal, irritated by many things that the British had done, came down from his capital, Murshidabad, and took possession of Calcutta. It was then that the so-called "Black Hole" tragedy is said to have taken place. The story goes that the Nawab's officers locked a large number of English people in a small and stifling room for the night, and that most of them were suffocated and died in the course of the night. Undoubtedly such a deed is barbarous and horrible, but the whole story is based on the narrative of one person who is not considered very reliable. It is thus thought by many people that the story is largely untrue and in any event is greatly exaggerated.

Clive took revenge for the Nawab's success in capturing Calcutta. But the empire-builder set about it in his own way by bribing the Nawab's minister, Mir Jafar, to play the traitor, and by forging a document, the story of which is too long to relate. Having prepared the ground by forgery and treason, Clive defeat-

ed the Nawab at Plassey in 1757. This was a small battle, as battles go, and indeed it had been practically won by Clive by his intrigues even before fighting began. But the little battle of Plassey had big results. It decided the fate of Bengal, and British dominion in India is often said to begin from Plassey. On this unsavoury foundation of treason and forgery was built up the British Empire in India. But such, more or less, is the way of all empires and empire-builders.

This sudden turn in fortune's wheel went to the head of the adventurous and covetous Englishmen in Bengal. They were masters of Bengal and there was no one to hold their hands. So, headed by Clive, they dipped their hands into the public treasury of the province and drained it absolutely. Clive made a present to himself of about two and a half million rupees in cash and, not content with this, took also a very valuable *jāgīr* or estate yielding several lakhs a year! All the other English people 'compensated' themselves in a like way. There was a shameless scramble for riches and the greed and unscrupulousness of the officials of the East India Company passed all bounds. The English became the nawab-makers of Bengal and changed nawabs at will. With each change there was bribery and enormous presents. They had no responsibility for government—that was the poor changing nawab's job; their job was to get rich quick.

A few years later, in 1764, the British won another battle, at Buxar, which resulted in the nominal emperor at Delhi submitting to them. He became their pensioner. The mastery of the British in Bengal and Behar was unchallenged now. They were not content with the vast plunder they were taking from the country and they set about finding new ways of making money. They had nothing to do with internal trade. Now they insisted on carrying on this trade without paying the transit duties which all other merchants dealing with home made goods had to pay. This was one of the first blows struck by the British at India's manufacturers and

trade.

The position of the British in north India was now one of power and wealth without any responsibility. The merchant adventurers of the East India Company did not trouble to distinguish between bona fide trade and unfair trade and plunder pure and simple. These were the days when English people returned to England from India, over flowing with Indian money, and were called "Nabobs." If you have read Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* you will remember such a bloated person in it.

Political insecurity and troubles, want of rain, and the British policy of grab, all combined to bring about a most terrible famine in Bengal and Behar in 1770. It is said that more than a third of the population of these areas perished. Think of this awful figure! How many millions died of slow starvation! Whole areas were depopulated, and jungles grew up and swallowed cultivated fields and villages. Nobody did anything to help the starving people. The Nawab had no power or authority or inclination. The East India Company had the power and authority, but they felt no responsibility or inclination. Their job was to gather money and to collect revenue, and they did this so efficiently and satisfactorily for their own pockets that, wonderful to relate, in spite of the great famine, and although over a third of the population disappeared, they collected the full amount of revenue from the survivors! Indeed they collected even more, and they did this, as the official report puts it, "violently". It is difficult to grasp fully the inhumanity of this forcible and violent collection from the starved out and miserable survivors of a mighty calamity.

In spite of the victory of the English in Bengal and over the French, they had to face great difficulties in the South. There were defeats and humiliations for them before final victory came. Haider Ali of Mysore was their bitter opponent. He was an able and fierce leader and repeatedly he defeated the English forces. In 1769 he dictated terms of peace favourable to himself

under the very walls of Madras. Ten years later he was again successful in a large measure, and after his death his son, Tippu Sultan, became a thorn in the side of the British. It took two more Mysore wars and many years to defeat Tippu finally. An ancestor of the present Maharaja of Mysore was then installed as a ruler under the protection of the British.

The Marathas also defeated the British in the South in 1782. In the north, Scindia of Gwalior was dominant and controlled the poor hapless Emperor of Delhi.

Meanwhile Warren Hastings was sent from England and he became the first governor-general. The British Parliament now began to take interest in India. Hastings is supposed to be the greatest of English rulers in India, but even in his time the government was well known to be corrupt and full of abuses. Some instances of extortion of large sums of money by Hastings have become famous. On his return to England Hastings was impeached before Parliament for his Indian administration and, after a long trial, was acquitted. Clive also, previously, had been censured by Parliament and he actually committed suicide. So England satisfied her conscience by censuring or trying these men, but in her heart she admired them and was willing enough to profit by their policy. Clive and Hastings may be censured, but they are the typical empire-builders, and so long as empires have to be forcibly imposed on subject people, and these people exploited, such persons will come to the front and will gain admiration. Methods of exploitation may differ from age to age, but the spirit is the same. Clive may have been censured by the British Parliament, but they have put up a statue to him in front of the India Office in Whitehall in London, and inside, his spirit dwells and fashions British policy in India.

Hastings started the policy of having puppet Indian princes under British control. So we have to thank him partly for the crowds of gilded and empty-headed maharajas and nawabs who strut about the Indian scene,

and make a nuisance of themselves.

As the British Empire grew in India there were many more wars with the Marathas, Afghans, Sikhs, Burmans, etc. But the unique thing about these wars was that although they were carried on for England's benefit, India paid for them. No burden fell on England or the English people. They only reaped the profit.

Remember that the East India Company—a trading company—was governing India. There was growing control by the British Parliament, but, in the main, India's destinies were in the hands of a set of merchant adventurers. Government was largely trade, trade was largely plunder. The lines of distinction were thin. Enormous dividends of 100% and 150% and over 200% per year were paid by the Company to its shareholders. And apart from this its agents in India picked up tidy little sums, as we have seen in the case of Clive. The officials of the Company also took trade monopolies and built up huge fortunes in this way with great rapidity. Such was the Company régime in India.

93

A GREAT MANCHU RULER IN CHINA

September 15, 1932

I am shaken up completely and I know not what to do. News has come, terrible news, that Bapu has determined to starve himself to death. My little world, in which he has occupied such a big place, shakes and totters, and there seems to be darkness and emptiness everywhere. His picture comes before my eyes again and again—it was the last time I saw him, just over a year ago—standing on the deck of the ship that was taking him away from India to the West. Shall I not see him again? And who shall I go to when I am in doubt and require wise counsel, or am afflicted and in sorrow and need loving comfort? What shall we all do when our beloved chief who inspired us and led us has gone? Oh, India is a horrid country to allow her great men to die so; and the people of India are slaves and have the minds of slaves to bicker and quarrel about trivial nothings and forget freedom itself.

I have been in no mood to write and I have thought even of ending this series of letters. But that would be a foolish thing. What can I do in this cell of mine, but read and write and think? And what can comfort me more when I am weary and distraught than thought of you and writing to you? Sorrow and tears are poor companions in this world. "More tears have been shed than the waters that are in the great ocean" said the Buddha, and many more tears will be shed before this unhappy world is put right. Our task still lies ahead of us, the great work still beckons, and there can be no rest for us and for those who follow us till that work is completed. So I have decided to carry on with my

usual routine, and I shall write to you as before.

My last few letters have been about India and the latter part of the tale I have told has not been an edifying one. India was lying prostrate, a prey to every brigand and adventurer. China, her great sister in the East, was in a much better way, and to China we must go now.

You will remember my telling you (Letter 80) of the prosperous days of the Ming period, and how corruption and disruption came, and China's northern neighbours, the Manchus, came down and conquered. From 1650 onwards the Manchus were firmly established all over China. Under this semi-foreign dynasty China grew strong and even aggressive. The Manchus brought a new energy and, while they interfered as little as possible with China internally, they spent their superfluous energy in extending their empire to the north and west and south.

A new dynasty usually produces some capable rulers to begin with and then tails off into incompetents. So also the Manchus produced some unusually able and competent rulers and statesmen. The second Emperor was Kang Hi. He was only 8 years old when he came to the throne. For 61 years he was the monarch of an empire which was larger and more populous than any other in the world. But his place in history is not secured because of this or because of his military prowess. He is remembered because of his statesmanship and his remarkable literary activities. He was the Emperor from 1661 to 1722, that is, for fifty-four years he was the contemporary of Louis XIV, the 'Grand Monarque' of France. Both of them reigned for tremendously long periods, Louis winning in this race for setting up a record by reigning for 72 years. It is interesting to compare the two, but the comparison is all to the disadvantage of Louis. He ruined his country and exhausted and burdened her with vast debts. He was intolerant in religion. Kang Hi was an earnest Confucian but he was tolerant of other faiths. Under him,

indeed under the first four Manchu emperors, the Ming culture was left undisturbed. It retained its high standard and in some respects improved upon it. Industry, art, literature and education flourished as in the days of the Mings. Wonderful porcelain continued to be produced. Colour printing was invented, and copper engraving learnt from the Jesuits.

The secret of the statesmanship and success of the Manchu rulers lay in their identifying themselves completely with Chinese culture. Absorbing Chinese thought and culture, they did not lose the energy and activity of the less civilized Manchus. And so Kang Hi was an unusual and curious mixture—a diligent student of philosophy and literature, absorbed in cultural activities, and an efficient military head, rather fond of conquest. He was no mere dilettante or superficial lover of literature and the arts. Among his literary activities the three following works, prepared at his suggestion, and often under his personal supervision, will give you some idea of the depth of his interest and learning.

The Chinese language, you will remember, consists of characters, not words. Kang Hi had a lexicon or dictionary of the language prepared. This was a mighty work containing over forty thousand characters, with numerous phrases illustrating them. It is said to be unrivalled even to-day.

Another of the productions which we owe to Kang Hi's enthusiasm was a huge illustrated encyclopaedia, a wonderful work running into several hundred volumes. This was a complete library in itself; everything was dealt with, every subject considered. The book was printed from movable copper plates after Kang Hi's death.

The third important work I shall mention here was a concordance of the whole of Chinese literature, that is a kind of dictionary in which words and passages are collected and compared. This also was an extraordinary piece of work as it involved a close study of the whole

of literature. Full quotations from poets, historians, and essayists were given.

There were many literary activities of Kang Hi. But these three are enough to impress anyone. I can think of no similar modern work to compare with any of these except the great Oxford English Dictionary which took over fifty years' labour of a large number of scholars, and was only completed a few years ago.

Kang Hi was quite favourable to Christianity and Christian missionaries. He encouraged foreign trade and threw open all the ports of China to it. But soon he discovered that the Europeans misbehaved and had to be kept in check. He suspected the missionaries, not without good reason, of intriguing with the imperialists of their home governments to facilitate conquest. This made him give up his tolerant attitude to Christianity. His suspicions were confirmed later by a report received from Chinese military officer at Canton. In this report it was pointed out how close the connection was in the Philippines and in Japan between European governments and their merchants and missionaries. The officer therefore recommended that in order to safeguard the Empire from invasion and foreign intrigue, foreign trade should be restricted and the spread of Christianity stopped.

This report was presented in 1717. It throws a flood of light on foreign intrigues in eastern countries and on the motives which led some of these countries to restrict foreign trade and the spread of Christianity. Some such development also took place, you may remember, in Japan, which led to the shutting up of the country. It is often stated that the Chinese and others are backward and ignorant and hate foreigners and put difficulties in the way of trade. As a matter of fact our review of history has shown to us clearly enough that there was abundant intercourse between India and China and other countries from the earliest times. There was no question of hating foreigners or foreign trade. For long, indeed, India controlled foreign markets. It was

only when foreign trade missions became the recognized methods of imperialist expansion of the western European powers, that they became suspect in the East.

The report of the Canton officer was considered by the Chinese Grand Council of State and approved. Thereupon the Emperor Kang Hi took action accordingly and issued decrees strictly limiting foreign trade and missionary activity.

I am now going to leave China proper for a while and take you to the north of Asia—Siberia—and tell you what was happening there. The vast expanse of Siberia connects China in the far east with Russia in the west. I have told you that the Manchu Empire in China was an aggressive one. It included Manchuria of course; it spread to Mongolia and beyond. Russia also, having driven out the Mongols of the Golden Horde, had become a strong centralised State, and was spreading out to the East, across the Siberian plains. The two empires now meet in Siberia.

The rapid weakening and decay of the Mongols in Asia is one of the strange facts of history. These people, who thundered across Asia and Europe, and conquered the greater part of the known world under Chengiz and his descendants, sink into oblivion. Under Timur they rose again for a while, but his empire died with him. After him, some of his descendants, called the Timurids, reigned in Central Asia, and we know that a well known school of painting flourished in their courts. Babar, who came to India, was a Timurid. In spite of these Timurid rulers, however, the Mongol race right across Asia, from Russia to its homeland in Mongolia, decayed and lost all importance. Why it did so, no one seems to know. Some suggest that changes in climate had something to do with it; others are of a different opinion. Any way the old conquerors and invaders are now themselves invaded from right and left.

After the break-up of the Mongol Empire the overland routes across Asia were closed up for nearly two hundred years. In the second half of the sixteenth

century, however, the Russians sent an embassy overland to China. They tried to establish diplomatic relations with the Ming emperors without success. Soon after, a Russian bandit of the name of Yermak crossed the Ural Mountains at the head of a band of Cossacks and conquered the little State of Sibir. It was from the name of this State that the name of Siberia is derived.

This was in 1581 and from that date the Russians went further and further to the east till they reached the Pacific Ocean in about fifty years. Soon they came in conflict with the Chinese in the Amur Valley and there was fighting between the two, resulting in the defeat of the Russians. In 1689 there was a treaty between the two countries—the treaty of Nerchinsk. Boundaries were fixed and trade arrangements made. This was the first Chinese treaty with a European country. The treaty checked Russian advance, but a considerable caravan trade developed. At that time the Russian Tsar was Peter the Great and he was anxious to develop close relations with China. He sent two embassies to Kang Hi and then kept a permanent envoy at the Chinese court.

China was in the habit of receiving foreign embassies from the earliest days. I think I mentioned in one of my letters that the Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius Antonius, sent an embassy in the second century after Christ. It is interesting to find that in 1656 Dutch and Russian embassies went to the Chinese court and they found envoys from the Great Mughal there. These must have been sent by Shah Jahan.

94

A CHINESE EMPEROR WRITES TO AN ENGLISH KING

September 16, 1932

The Manchu Emperors seem to have been extraordinarily long-lived. The grandson of Kang Hi was the fourth emperor, Chien Lung. He also reigned for the tremendous period of sixty years from 1736 to 1796. He was like his grandfather in other respects also; his two main interests were literary activities and extension of empire. He had a great search made for all literary works worthy of preservation. These were collected and were catalogued in great detail. Catalogue is hardly the word for it as all the facts known about each work were put down and critical remarks were added. This mighty descriptive catalogue of the Imperial Library was under four heads: classics, that is, Confucianism; history; philosophy; and general literature. It is said that there is no parallel to such a work anywhere.

About this time also Chinese novels, short stories and plays developed and attained a high standard. It is interesting to note that in England also the novel was developing then. Chinese porcelain and other fine works of art were in demand in Europe and there was a continuous trade in them. More interesting was the beginning of the tea trade. This began in the days of the first Manchu Emperor. Tea reached England probably in the reign of Charles II. Samuel Pepys, a famous diarist in English, has an entry in his diary in 1660 about drinking for the first time "Tee (a China drink)." The tea trade developed tremendously and two hundred years later, in 1860, the export of tea from one Chinese port alone, Foochow, in one season, was one hundred million

pounds. Later tea was cultivated in other places also, and, as you know, it is now extensively grown in India and Ceylon.

Chien Lung extended his empire by conquering Turkestan in Central Asia and occupying Tibet. Some years later, in 1790, the Gurkhas of Nepal invaded Tibet. Chien Lung thereupon not only drove out the Gurkhas from Tibet but pursued them over the Himalayas into Nepal, and compelled Nepal to become a vassal State of the Chinese Empire. This conquest of Nepal was a remarkable achievement. For a Chinese army to cross Tibet and then the Himalayas and beat a warlike people like the Gurkhas in their very homeland, is amazing. As it happened the British in India had trouble with Nepal only 22 years later, in 1814. They sent an army to Nepal, but this met with great difficulties, although it had no Himalayas to cross.

At the end of Chien Lung's reign in 1796 the Empire directly governed by him included Manchuria, Mongolia, Tibet and Turkestan. Vassal states admitting his suzerainty were: Korea, Annam, Siam and Burma. But conquest and the quest of military glory are expensive games to play. They result in heavy expenditure and the burden of taxation grows. This burden always falls most on the poorest. Economic conditions were also changing and this added to the discontent. Secret societies were formed all over the country. China, like Italy, has had quite a reputation for secret societies. Some of these had interesting names: White Lily Society, Society of Divine Justice, White Feather Society, Heaven and Earth Society.

Meanwhile, in spite of all restrictions, foreign trade was growing. There was great dissatisfaction among the foreign merchants at these restrictions. The East India Company, which had spread out to Canton, had the biggest share of the trade, and felt the restrictions most. These were the days, as we shall see in subsequent letters, when the so-called Industrial Revolution was beginning, and England was taking a lead in this. The

steam engine had been made, and new methods and the use of machinery were making work easier and increasing production, especially of cotton goods. These extra goods that were made had to be sold and new markets were therefore sought. England was very fortunate in controlling India just at this period as she could take steps, as she in fact did, to force the sale of her goods there. But she wanted the China trade also.

So in 1792 the British government sent an embassy, under Lord Macartney, to Peking. George III was then King of England. Chien Lung received them in audience and there was an exchange of presents. But the Emperor refused to make any change in the old restrictions on foreign trade. The answer which Chien Lung sent to George III is a very interesting document and I shall give you a long extract from it. It runs thus:

......"You, O King, live beyond the confines of many seas, nevertheless, impelled by your humble desire to partake of the benefits of our civilization, you have despatched a mission respectfully bearing your memorial .... To show your devotion, you have also sent offerings of your country's produce. I have read your memorial: the earnest terms in which it is cast reveal a respectful humility on your part, which is highly praiseworthy......................

Swaying the wide world, I have but one aim in view, namely, to maintain a perfect governance and to fulfil the duties of the State; strange and costly objects do not interest me. I........have no use for your country's manufactures. It behoves you, O King, to respect my sentiments and to display even greater devotion and loyalty in future, so that by perpetual submission to our Throne, you may secure peace and prosperity for your country hereafter......................

Tremblingly obey and show no negligence!"

George III and his ministers must have had a bit of a shock when they read this answer! But the serene confidence in a superior civilization and the majesty of power, which the answer shows, had no enduring basis

in fact. The Manchu Government looked strong and was strong under Chien Lung. But its foundations were being sapped by the changing economic order. The secret societies I have mentioned were indications of discontent. But the real trouble was that the country was not being made to fit in with the new economic conditions. The West, meanwhile, was the leader in this new order and it forged ahead rapidly and became stronger and stronger. In less than seventy years after the Emperor Chien Lung had sent his very superior reply to George III of England, China was humiliated by England and France and her pride was dragged in the dust.

I must keep that story, however, for my next letter on China. With the death of Chien Lung in 1796 we reach practically the end of the eighteenth century. But before this century had ended much that was extraordinary had happened in America and in Europe. It was indeed due to the wars and troubles in Europe that the western pressure on China was lessened for a quarter of a century. So in our next letter we go to Europe and take up the tale from the beginning of the eighteenth century, and make it fit in with developments in India and China.

But before I end this letter I shall tell you of Russia's progress in the East. After the treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689 between Russia and China, Russian influence in the East went on increasing for a century and a half. In 1728 a Danish captain in Russia's service, named Vitus Bering, explored the strait between Asia and America. This strait, perhaps you know, is still called the Strait of Bering, after his name. Bering crossed over to Alaska and declared it Russian territory. Alaska was a great place for furs, and as there was a great demand for furs in China, a special fur trade developed between Russia and China. There was indeed so much demand for furs, etc., in China towards the end of the eighteenth century that Russia imported them from Hudson Bay in Canada, *via* England, and then

sent them to the great fur market in Kiakhta near Lake Baikal in Siberia. What a tremendous journey the furs took!

This letter, for a change, is shorter than most of my letters to you in this series. I hope you will appreciate the change.

95

THE WAR OF IDEAS IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY EUROPE

September 19, 1932

We shall go back to Europe now and follow its changing destiny. It is on the eve of mighty changes which impressed themselves on the world's history. To understand these changes we shall have to pry underneath the surface of things, and try to find out what was passing in the minds of men. For action, as we see it, is the result of a complex of thoughts and passions, prejudices and superstitions, hopes and fears; and the action by itself is difficult to understand unless we consider with it the causes that led up to it. But this is no easy matter; and even if I was capable of writing pertinently about these causes and motives which fashion the outstanding events of history, I would not think of making these letters duller and heavier than they already are. Sometimes I fear that in my enthusiasm for a subject, or for a certain point of view, I rush into deeper water than I should. You will have to put up with that, I am afraid. We cannot therefore go deeply into these causes. But it would be exceedingly foolish to ignore them; and indeed if we did so we would miss the fascination and significance of history.

We have considered the upheavals and disorders of Europe during the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century. In the middle of the seventeenth century there was the treaty of Westphalia (1648) which ended the terrible Thirty Years' War; and, the year after, the civil war in England ended and Charles I lost his head. There followed a period of comparative peace. The continent of Europe was thoroughly ex-

hausted. Trade with the colonies in America and elsewhere brought money to Europe and this gave relief and lessened the tension between different classes.

In England there came the peaceful revolution which drove away James II and gave the victory to Parliament (1688). The real fight had been won by Parliament in the civil war against Charles I. The peaceful revolution merely confirmed the decision arrived at forty years previously by force of arms.

The King had thus to take a back seat in England, but on the continent it was otherwise, except in a few small areas, like Switzerland and Holland. Absolute and irresponsible monarchs were still the fashion there and Louis XIV of France, the Grand Monarque, was the model and the paragon to be followed by others. The seventeenth century is practically the century of Louis XIV on the continent of Europe. Heedless of the doom that awaited their kind, and not even taking a lesson from the fate of Charles I of England, the kings of Europe went on playing the autocrat with all pomp and circumstance and folly. They claimed all the power and all the wealth of the land and their country was to them almost like a private estate. Over four hundred years ago a famous Dutch scholar, Erasmus, wrote: "Of all the birds the eagle alone has seemed to wise men the type of royalty—not beautiful, not musical, not fit for food, but carnivorous, greedy, hateful to all, the curse of all, and, with its great powers of doing harm, surpassing them in its desire of doing it." Kings have almost disappeared to-day and such as remain are relics of a past age with little or no power. We can now ignore them. But others and more dangerous people have taken their place and the eagle is still a fitting emblem for these latter day imperialists and kings of iron and oil and silver and gold.

The monarchies of Europe developed strong centralised States. The old feudal ideas of lord and vassal were dead or dying. The new idea of country as a unit and an entity took its place. France, under two very

able ministers, Richelieu and Mazarin, was the leader in this. So nationalism grew, and a measure of patriotism. Religion, which had so far been the most important element in men's lives, retired into the background and new ideas took its place, as I hope to tell you later in this letter.

The seventeenth century is even more notable in that the foundations of modern science were laid in it, and a world market was created. This vast new market naturally upset the old economy of Europe, and much that subsequently happened in Europe and Asia and America can only be understood if this new market is kept in view. Science later developed and provided means to supply the needs of this world market.

In the eighteenth century the race for colonies and empire, especially between England and France, resulted in war not only in Europe but in Canada and, as we have seen, in India. After these wars in the middle of the century there was again a period of comparative peace. The surface of Europe appeared to be calm and almost unruffled. The numerous courts of Europe were full of very polite and cultured and fine ladies and gentlemen. But the calm was on the surface only. Underneath there was turmoil, and the minds of men were troubled and agitated by new thoughts and ideas; and the bodies of men, apart from the charmed circle of the courts and some of the upper classes, were subjected to greater and greater suffering owing to increasing poverty. The calm in the second half of the eighteenth century in Europe was thus a very deceptive one; it was the prelude to a storm. On the 14th of July, 1789, the storm broke in the capital of the greatest of European monarchies—Paris. It swept away this monarchy and a hundred other out of date and moss-grown customs and privileges.

This storm and subsequent change was long prepared in France, and partly in other European countries also, by new ideas. Right through the Middle Ages religion was the dominant factor in Europe. Even after-

wards, during the days of the Reformation this continued to be so. Every question, whether it was political or economic, was considered from the point of view of religion. Religion was organized and meant the views of the Pope or the high officials of the Church. The organization of society was very like caste in India. The idea of caste originally was a division according to professions or functions. It was this very idea of social classes according to functions that lay at the basis of the ideas of the Middle Ages on society. Within a class, as within a caste in India, there was equality. As between two or more classes, however, there was inequality. This inequality was at the very basis of the whole social structure and no one challenged it. Those who suffered under this system were told to "expect their reward in heaven." In this way religion tried to uphold the unjust social order and tried to distract people's minds from it by talking of the next word. It also preached what is called the doctrine of trusteeship, that is to say, that the rich man was a kind of trustee for the poor; the landlord held his land "in trust" for his tenant. This was the Church's way of explaining a very awkward situation. It made little difference to the rich man, and it brought no comfort to the poor. Clever explanations cannot take the place of food in a hungry stomach.

The bitter religious wars between Catholic and Protestant, the intolerance of both the Catholic and the Calvinist, and the Inquisition, all resulted from this intense religious and communal outlook. Think of it! Many hundreds of thousands of women are said to have been burnt in Europe as witches, mostly by Puritans. New ideas in science were crushed because these were supposed to be impertinences to the Church's view of things. It was a static, an unmoving view of life; there was no question of progress.

We find these ideas begin to change gradually from the sixteenth century onwards; science appears and the all-embracing hold of religion lessens; politics and eco-

nomics are considered apart from religion. There is, it is said, a growth of rationalism, that is of reason as opposed to blind faith, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The eighteenth century indeed is supposed to have established the victory of toleration. This is partly true. But the victory really meant that people had given up attaching as much importance to their religion as they used to. Toleration was very near to indifference. When people are terribly keen about anything they are seldom tolerant about it; it is only when they care little for it that they graciously proclaim that they are tolerant. With the coming of industrialism and the big machine, the indifference to religion grew even more. Science sapped the foundations of the old belief in Europe; the new industry and economies presented new problems which filled people's minds. So people in Europe gave up (but not entirely) the habit of breaking each other's heads on questions of religious belief or dogma; instead, they took to breaking heads on economic and social issues.

It is interesting and instructive to compare this religious period of Europe with India to-day. India is often called, both in praise and in derision, a religious and spiritual country. It is contrasted with Europe, which is called irreligious and too fond of the good things of life. As a matter of fact this "religious" India is extraordinarily like Europe in the sixteenth century in so far as religion colours the Indian outlook. Of course we cannot carry the comparison too far. But it is very clear that we have the same phenomena here in our overemphasis on questions of religious faith and dogma, in our mixing up political and economic questions with the interests of religious groups, in our communal quarrels, and similar questions, as existed in medieval Europe. There is no question of a practical and materialistic West and a spiritual and other-worldly East. The difference is between an industrial and highly mechanised West, with all its accompanying good and bad points, and an East which is still largely pre-industrial and agricultural.

This growth of toleration and rationalism in Europe was a slow process. It was not helped much at first by books as people were afraid to criticize Christianity publicly. To do so meant imprisonment or some other punishment. A German philosopher was banished from Prussia because he had praised Confucius too much. This was interpreted as a slight on Christianity. In the eighteenth century, however, as these new ideas became clearer and more general, books came out dealing with these subjects. The most famous writer of the time on rationalistic and other subjects was Voltaire, a Frenchman, who was imprisoned and banished and who ultimately lived at Ferney near Geneva. When in prison he was not allowed paper or ink. So he wrote verses with pieces of lead between the lines of a book. He became a celebrity when quite young. Indeed he was only ten when he attracted attention by his unusual ability. Voltaire hated injustice and bigotry and he waged war against them. His famous cry was *Ecrasez l'infâme*. He lived to a great old age (1694 to 1778) and wrote an enormous number of books. Because he criticized Christianity he was fiercely hated by orthodox Christians. In one of his books he says that "a man who accepts his religion without examining it is like an ox which allows itself to be harnessed." Voltaire's writings had great influence in making people incline towards rationalism and the new ideas. His old house at Ferney is still a place of pilgrimage for many.

Another great writer, a contemporary of Voltaire but younger than him, was Jean Jacques Rousseau. He was born in Geneva, and Geneva is very proud of him. Do you remember his statue there? Rousseau's writings on religion and politics raised quite an outcry. Nonetheless, his novel and rather daring social and political theories set the minds of many afire with new ideas and new resolves. His political theories are out of date now, but they played a great part in preparing the people of France for the great revolution. Rousseau did not preach revolution, probably he did not even

expect one. But his books and ideas certainly sowed the seed in men's minds which blossomed out in the revolution. His best known book is the "Social Contract" —Du Contract Social—and this begins with a famous sentence (I quote from memory): "Man is born free but is everywhere in chains."

Rousseau was also a great educationist and many of the new methods of teaching he suggested are now used in schools.

Besides Voltaire and Rousseau there were many other notable thinkers and writers in France in the eighteenth century. I shall only mention one other name, Montesquieu, who wrote "Esprit des Lois." An Encyclopaedia also came out in Paris about this time and this was also full of articles by Diderot and other able writers on political and social subjects. Indeed, France seemed to be full of philosophers and thinkers, and what is more, they were widely read and they succeeded in making large numbers of ordinary people think their thoughts and discuss their theories. Thus there grew up in France a strong body of opinion opposed to religious intolerance and political and social privilege. A vague desire for liberty possessed the people. And yet, curiously, neither the philosophers nor the people wanted to get rid of the king. The idea of a republic was not a common one then and people still hoped that they might have an ideal prince, something like Plato's philosopher king, who would remove their burdens and give them justice and a measure of liberty. At any rate the philosophers write so. One is inclined to doubt how far the suffering masses loved the king.

In England there was no such development of political thought as in France. It is said that the Englishman is not a political animal whilst a Frenchman is one. Apart from this the English revolution of 1688 had relieved the tension somewhat. There was, however, plenty of privilege still enjoyed by certain classes. New economic developments, about which I shall tell you something in another letter soon, and trade and entangle-

ments in America and India, kept the English mind busy. And when social tension became great, a temporary compromise averted the danger of a break. In France there was no room for such compromise, and hence the upset.

It is interesting to note, however, that the modern novel developed in England about the middle of the eighteenth century. *Gulliver's Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe,* both appeared, as I have already told you, early in the eighteenth century. They were followed by real novels. A new reading public comes into evidence in England at this time.

It was in the eighteenth century also that the Englishman Gibbon wrote his famous *Decline and fall of the Roman Empire.* I have already referred to him and his book in a previous letter of mine when I dealt with the Roman Empire.

96

EUROPE ON THE EVE OF GREAT CHANGES

September 24, 1932

We have tried to have a little peep into the minds of the men and women of the eighteenth century in Europe, especially in France. It has been just a glimpse revealing to us some new ideas growing and battling with the old. Having been behind the scenes we shall now have a look at the actors on the public stage of Europe.

In France old Louis XIV finally succeeded in dying in 1715. He had outlived several generations and he was succeeded by his great-grandson, who became Louis XV. There was another long reign of 59 years. Thus two successive kings of France, Louis XIV and XV, reigned for a total period of 131 years! Surely this must be a world record. The two Manchu emperors in China, Kang Hi and Chien Lung, each reigned for over sixty years, but they did not follow each other and there was a third reign in between.

Apart from its extraordinary length, the reign of Louis XV was chiefly remarkable for its disgusting corruption and intrigue. The resources of the kingdom were used for the pleasures of the king. There was extravagance at court based on graft. The men and women at court who happened to please the king got free gifts of land and sinecure offices, which meant income without work. And the burden of all this fell more and more on the masses. Autocracy and incompetence and corruption went hand in hand, merrily forward. Is it surprising that before the century was over, they came to the end of their path and stepped into the abyss? What does surprise is that the path was

such a long one and the fall came so late. Louis XV escaped the people's judgment and vengeance; it was his successor in 1774, Louis XVI, who had to face this.

In spite of his incompetence and depravity, Louis XV had no doubts about his absolute authority in the State. He was everything, and no one could challenge his right to do anything he chose. Listen to what he said, addressing an assembly in Paris in 1766:

> *"C'est en ma personne seul que réside l'antorité souveraine..............C'est à moi seul qu'appartient le pouvoir léjislatif sans dépendance et sans partage. L'ordre public tout entier émane de moi; j'en suis le guardien suprême. Mon peuple n'est qu'un avec moi; les droits et les intérêts de la nation, dont on ose, faire un corps séparé du monarque, sont nécessairement unis avec les miens et ne reposent qu'entre mes mains."**

Such was the ruler of France for the greater part of the eighteenth century. He seemed to dominate Europe for a while, but then he came into conflict with the ambitions of other kings and peoples, and had to acknowledge defeat. Some of the old rivals of France no longer played a dominant part on the European stage, but others arose to take their place and challenge the French power. Proud Spain had fallen back both in Europe and elsewhere after its brief day of imperial glory. But she still held large colonies in America and the Philippine Islands. The Hapsburghs of Austria, who had so long monopolised the headship of the Empire and, through this, the leadership of Europe, were also no longer so prominent as they used to be. Austria was not the leading State of the Empire now; another, Prussia, had risen and become equally important.

Translation: *It is solely in my person that sovereign authority resides......To me alone appertains legislative power without dependence and without any participation. Public order in its entirety emanates from me; I am its supreme guardian. My people have no existence apart from me; the rights and the interests of the nation which some people presume form a body separate from the king, are necessarily identical with mine and rest only in my hands.

There were wars about the Austrian succession to the crown, and for a long period a woman, Maria Theresa, occupied it.

The treaty of Westphalia of 1648, you will remember, had made Prussia one of the important powers of Europe. The house of Hohenzollern ruled there and challenged the supremacy of the other German dynasty—the house of Hapsburgh in Austria. For forty-six years (1740-1786) Prussia was ruled by Frederick, who has been called, because of military success, the Great. He was an absolute monarch, like the others in Europe, but he put on the pose of a philosopher and tried to be friends with Voltaire. He built up a strong army and was a successful general. He called himself a rationalist and is reported to have said that "everyone should be allowed to get to heaven in his own way."

From the seventeenth century onwards French culture was dominant in Europe. In the middle years of the eighteenth century this became even more marked and Voltaire had a tremendous European reputation. Indeed some people even call this century 'the century of Voltaire.' French literature was read in all the courts of Europe, even in backward St. Petersburg, and cultured and educated people preferred writing and speaking in French. Thus Frederick the Great of Prussia almost always wrote and spoke in French. He even tried writing French poetry which he wanted Voltaire to correct and polish up for him.

East of Prussia lay Russia, already growing into the giant of later years. We have seen, when we were considering Chinese history, how Russia spread across Siberia to the Pacific, and even crossed to Alaska. Towards the end of the seventeenth century Russia had a strong ruler, Peter the Great. Peter wanted to put an end to many of the old Mongolian associations and outlook that Russia had inherited. He wanted to "westernize" her, as they say. So he left his old capital, Moscow, which was full of the old traditions, and built himself a new city and a new capital. This was St. Petersburg in the

north, on the banks of the Neva, at the head of the Gulf of Finland. This city was quite unlike Moscow with its golden cupolas and domes; it was more like the great cities of western Europe. Petersburg became the symbol of "westernization" and Russia began to play a greater part in European politics. Perhaps you know that Petersburg, the name, is no more. Twice, in the course of the last twenty years, it has changed its name. The first change was to Petrograd, and the second one, which now holds, to Leningrad.

Peter the Great made many changes in Russia. I shall mention one, which will interest you. He put an end to the practice of the seclusion of women, called *terem,* which prevailed in Russia at the time. Peter had his eyes on India and knew the value of India in international politics. In his will he wrote: "Bear in mind that the commerce of India is the commerce of the world; and that he who can exclusively command it is dictator of Europe." His last words were justified by the rapid growth in England's power after she gained dominion over India. The exploitation of India gave England prestige and wealth, and made her for several generations the leading power of the world.

Between Prussia and Austria, on the one side, and Russia, on the other, lay Poland. It was a backward country with a poor peasantry. There was little trade or industry and no great towns. It has a curious constitution with an elected king, and with the power in the hands of the feudal aristocrats. As the countries surrounding it became stronger, Poland became weaker. Prussia and Russia and Austria eyed it hungrily.

And yet it was the King of Poland that had beaten back the last Turkish attack on Vienna in 1683. The Ottoman Turks were not aggressive again. They had exhausted their energy and the tide turned gradually. Henceforward they were on their defensive and slowly the Turkish Empire in Europe began to shrink. But in the first half of the eighteenth century, the period we are considering, Turkey was a powerful country in the

south-east of Europe and her empire extended over the Balkans and across Hungary to Poland.

Italy in the south was split up under different rulers and did not count for much in European politics. The Pope no longer played a commanding role, and the kings and princes, while treating him with deference, ignored him in political matters. Gradually, a new system was arising in Europe, the system of Great Powers. Strong centralised monarchies, as I told you, helped to develop the idea of a nation. People began to think of their countries in a peculiar way, which is common enough to-day, but was uncommon before this period. France, England or Britannia, Italia and other similar figures, begin to emerge. They seem to symbolize the nation. Later on, in the nineteenth century, these figures take definite shape in the minds of men and women and move their hearts strangely. They become the new goddesses at whose altar every patriot is supposed to worship, and in their name and on their behalf patriots fight and kill each other. You know how the idea of *Bhārat Mātā*, mother India, moves all of us, and how for this mythical and imaginary figure people gladly suffer and give their lives. So people in other countries felt also for their idea of their motherland. But all this was a later development. For the present I want to tell you that the eighteenth century saw this idea of nationality and patriotism take root. The French philosophers helped in this process, and the great French Revolution put the seal on this idea.

These nations were the "Powers". Kings came and went but the nation continued. Of these Powers gradually some stood out as more important than the others. Thus in the early eighteenth century France, England, Austria, Prussia and Russia were definitely "Great Powers." Some others, like Spain, were in theory great but they were declining.

England was rapidly gaining in wealth and importance. Upto the time of Elizabeth she had not been an important country in the European sense, and much

less so in the world sense. Her population was small; probably it did not exceed six millions at the time, which is far less than the population of London now. But with the Puritan revolution and the victory of Parliament over the king, England adapted herself to the new conditions and went ahead. So also Holland, after the yoke of Spain had been shaken off.

In the eighteenth century there was a scramble for colonies in America and Asia. Many European powers took part in this but the chief contest ultimately lay between two—England and France. England had got a great lead in the race both in America and India. France, apart from being incompetently governed by Louis XV, was too much involved in European politics. From 1756 to 1763 war was waged between these two powers as well as several others in Europe and Canada and India to decide as to who was to be master. This war is called the Seven Years' War. We saw a bit of it in India when France was defeated. In Canada also England won. In Europe, England followed a policy, for which she has became well known, of paying others to fight for her. Frederick the Great was her ally.

The result of this Seven Years' War was very favourable to England. Both in India and Canada she had no European rival left. On the seas her naval supremacy was established. Thus England was in a position to establish and extend her empire and to become a world power. Prussia also increased in importance.

Europe was again exhausted by this fighting and again there appeared to be comparative calm over the continent. But this calm did not prevent Prussia, Austria and Russia from swallowing up the kingdom of Poland. Poland was in no position to fight these Powers and so these three wolves fell on her, and by partitioning her repeatedly, put an end to Poland as an independent country. There were three partitions—in 1772, 1793 and 1795. After the first of these, the Poles made a great effort to reform and strengthen their country. They established a parliament and there was a revival

of art and literature. But the autocratic monarchs surrounding Poland had tasted blood and they were not to be baulked; besides they had no love for parliaments. So, inspite of the patriotism of the Poles and a brave fight they put up under their great hero Kosciusko, Poland disappeared from the map of Europe in 1795. It disappeared then, but the Poles kept alive their patriotism and continued to dream of freedom, and a hundred and twenty-three years later, their dream was realised, when Poland reappeared as an independent country after the Great War.

I have said that there was a measure of calm in Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century. But this did not last long, and it was mostly on the surface. I have also told you of various happenings in this century. But the eighteenth century is really famous for three events—three revolutions—and everything else that happened in Europe during these hundred years fades into insignificance when put beside these three. All these three revolutions took place in the last quarter of the century. They were of three distinct types—political, industrial, and social. The political revolution took place in America. This was the revolt of the British colonies there, resulting in the formation of an independent republic, the United States of America, which was to become so powerful in our own time. The industrial revolution began in England and spread to other western European countries and then elsewhere. It was a peaceful revolution but a far reaching one, and it has influenced life all over the world more than anything in recorded history before. It meant the coming of steam and the big machine and ultimately the innumerable offshoots of industrialism that we see around us. The social revolution was the great French Revolution which not only put an end to monarchy in France but also to innumerable privileges, and brought new classes to the front. We shall have to study all these three revolutions separately in some slight detail.

On the eve of these great changes we have seen that

monarchies were supreme in Europe. In England and Holland there were parliaments but they were controlled by aristocrats and the rich. The laws were made for the rich, to protect their property and rights and privileges. Education also was only for the rich and privileged classes. Indeed, government itself was for these classes. One of the great problems of the time was the problem of the poor. Although conditions improved a little at the top, the misery of the poor remained and indeed became more marked.

Right through the eighteenth century the nations of Europe carried on a cruel and heartless slave trade. Slaves, as such, had ceased to exist in Europe, although the serf or villein, as the cultivators on the land were called, were little better than slaves. With the discovery of America, however, the old slave trade was revived in its cruelest form. The Spanish and Portuguese began it by capturing Negroes on the African coast and taking them to America to work on the land. The English took their full share in this abominable trade. It is difficult for you or for any of us to have any idea of the terrible sufferings of the Africans as they were hunted and caught like wild beasts and then chained together and so transported to America. Vast numbers died before they could even reach their journey's end. Of all those who have suffered in this world, the Negroes have perhaps borne the heaviest burden. Slavery was formally abolished in the nineteenth century, England taking the lead. In the United States a civil war had to be fought to decide this question. The millions of Negroes in the United States of America to-day are the descendants of these slaves.

I shall finish this letter with a pleasant note by telling you of the great development of music in this century in Germany and Austria. As you know, Germans are the leaders in European music. Some of their great names appear even in the seventeenth century. As elsewhere music in Europe was almost a part of religious ceremonial. Gradually this is separated and music

becomes an art by itself, apart from religion. Two great names stand out in the eighteenth century—Mozart and Beethoven. They were both infant prodigies, both composers of genius. Beethoven, perhaps the greatest musical composer of the West, became, strange to say, quite deaf, and so the wonderful music he created for others, he could not hear himself. But his heart must have sung to him before he captured that music.

97

THE COMING OF THE BIG MACHINE

September 26, 1932

We shall now consider what is called the Industrial Revolution. It began in England and in England therefore we shall study it briefly. I can give no exact date for it, for the change did not take place on a particular date as if by magic. Yet it was rapid enough and from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, in less than a hundred years, it changed the face of life. We have followed the course of history, you and I in these letters, from the earliest days for several thousand years, and we have noted many changes. But all these changes, great as they sometimes were, did not vitally alter the way life was lived by the people. If Socrates or Ashoka or Julius Caesar had suddenly appeared in Akbar's court in India, or in England or France in the early eighteenth century, they would have noticed many changes. They might have approved of some of these changes and disapproved of others. But on the whole they would have recognised the world, outwardly at any rate, for ideas would have differed greatly. And, again so far as outward appearances went, they would not have felt wholly out of place in it. If they wanted to travel, they would have done so by horse or carriage drawn by horses, much as they used to do in their own time, and the time occupied in the journey would have been about the same.

But if any of the three came to our present day world, he would be mightly surprised, and it may be that his surprise will often be a painful one. He will find that people travel now far faster than the fastest horse, swifter almost than the arrow from the bow. By

railway and steamship and automobile and aeroplane they rush about at a terrific pace all over the world. Then he will be interested in the telegraph and the telephone and the wireless, and the vast number of books that modern printing presses throw out, and newspapers and a host of other things—all children of the new forms of industry which the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century and after introduced. Whether Socrates or Ashoka or Julius Caesar would approve of these new methods or disapprove of them, I cannot say, but there is no doubt that they would find them radically different from the methods prevailing in their own times.

The Industrial Revolution brought the big machine to the world. It ushered in the Machine Age or the Mechanical Age. Of course there had been machines before, but none had been so big as the new machine. What is a machine? It is a big tool to help man to do his work. Man has been called a tool-making animal and from his earliest days, he has made tools and tried to better them. His supremacy over the other animals, many of them more powerful than he was, was established because of his tools. The tool was an extension of his hand; or you may call it a third hand. The machine was the extension of the tool. The tool and the machine raised man above the brute creation. They freed human society from the bondage of nature. With the help of the tool and the machine man found it easier to produce things. He produced more and yet had more leisure. And this resulted in the progress of the arts of civilization, and of thought and science.

But the big machine and all its allies have not been unmixed blessings. If it has encouraged the growth of civilization it has also encouraged the growth of barbarism by producing terrible weapons of warfare and destruction. If it has produced abundance, this abundance has not been for the masses, but for the limited few. It has made the difference between the luxury of the very rich and the poverty of the poor even greater than it was

in the past. Instead of being the tool and servant of man, it has presumed to become his master. On the one side, it has taught virtues—co-operation, organization, punctuality; on the other, it has made life itself a dull routine for millions, a mechanical burden with little of joy or freedom in it.

But why should we blame the poor machine for the ills that have followed from it? The fault lies with man who has misused it, and with society which has not profited by it fully. It seems to be unthinkable that the world, or any country, can go back to the old days before the Industrial Revolution, and it hardly seems desirable or wise that in order to get rid of some evils, we should throw away the numerous good things that industrialism brings us. And in any event the machine has come and is going to stay. Therefore the problem for us is to retain the good things of industrialism and to get rid of the evil that attaches to it. We must profit by the wealth it produces but see to it that the wealth is evenly distributed among those who produce it.

This letter was meant to tell you something about the Industrial Revolution in England. But, as is my habit, I have gone off at a tangent and started discussing the effects of industrialism. I have put before you a problem that is troubling people to-day. But before we reach to-day we have to deal with yesterday; before we consider the results of industrialism we must study when and how it came. I have made this preamble so long in order to impress you with the importance of this revolution. It was not a mere political revolution changing kings and rulers at the top. It was a revolution affecting all the various classes and indeed everybody. The triumph of the machine and of industrialism meant the triumph of the classes that controlled the machine. As I told you long ago the class that controls the means of production is the class that rules. In olden times the only important means of production was the land, and therefore those who owned the land, that is the landlords, were the bosses. In feudal times this was so.

Other wealth than land then appears and the land owning classes begin to share their power with the owners of the new means of production. And now comes the big machine and naturally the classes that controlled this come to the front and become the bosses.

In the course of these letters I have told you on several occasions how the bourgeoisie of the towns rose in importance and struggled with the feudal nobles and gained a measure of victory in some places. I have told you of the collapse of feudalism and probably I have led you to imagine that the bourgeoisie, the new middle class, took its place. If so I want to correct myself for the rise to power of the middle class was much slower and it had not taken place at the period we are discussing. It took a great revolution in France and the fear of a similar revolution in England for the bourgeoisie to gain power. The English Revolution of 1688 resulted in the victory of Parliament, but Parliament itself, you will remember, was a body representing a small number of people, chiefly landowners. Some big merchants from the towns might get into it, but on the whole the merchant class, the middle class, had no place in it.

Political power was thus in the hands of those who owned landed property. This was so in England and even more so elsewhere. Landed property was inherited from father to son. Thus political power itself became an inherited privilege. I have already told you of "pocket boroughs" in England, that is constituencies returning members to Parliament, consisting of just a few electors. These few electors were usually under some one's control and thus the borough was said to be in his pocket. Such elections were of course farcical and there was a great deal of corruption and selling of votes, and seats in Parliament. Some rich members of the rising middle class could afford to buy a seat in Parliament in this way. But the masses had no look in either way. They inherited no privileges or power, and obviously they could not buy power. So what could they do when they were sat upon and exploited by the

rich and the privileged? They had no voice inside Parliament or even in the election of members to Parliament. Even outside demonstrations by them were frowned upon by those in authority and put down by force. They were disorganised and weak and helpless. But when the cup of suffering and misery was overful they forgot law and order and had a riot. There was thus a great deal of lawlessness in England in the eighteenth century. The general economic condition of the people was bad. It was made worse by the efforts of the big landlords to increase their estates at the expense of the small farmers who were squeezed out. Common land belonging to villages was also grabbed. All this increased the sufferings of the masses. The people also resented having no voice at all in the government and there was a vague demand for more liberty.

In France the position was even worse and led to the Revolution. In England the king was unimportant and more people shared the power. Besides, there was no such development of political ideas in England as in France. So England escaped a big burst-up and the changes came to it more gradually. Meanwhile the rapid changes made by industrialism and the new economic structure forced the pace.

Such was the political background in England in the eighteenth century. In home industries England had forged ahead chiefly by the immigration of foreign artisans. The religious wars on the continent forced many Protestants to leave their countries and homes and take refuge in England. At the time when the Spaniards were trying to crush the revolt in the Netherlands, large numbers of artisans fled from the Netherlands to England. It is said that thirty thousand of them settled in the east of England and Queen Elizabeth made it a condition of allowing them to settle that each house should employ one English apprentice. This helped England to build up her own cloth making industry. When this was established the English people prohibited the fabrics of the Netherlands from coming to England.

Meanwhile the Netherlands were still in the midst of their fierce war for freedom and their industires suffered. So it happened that while previously numerous vessels laden with the fabrics of the Netherlands went to England, soon after, this was not only stopped but an opposite flow of English fabrics to the Netherlands began and increased in volume.

Thus the Walloons from Belgium taught the English cloth making. Later came the Huguenots, Protestant refugees from France, and they taught the English silk weaving. In the latter half of the seventeenth century large numbers of skilled workers came over from the Continent and the English learned many trades from them, such as the making of paper, glass, mechanical toys, clocks and watches.

So England, which had so far been a backward country in Europe, grew in importance and wealth. London also grew and became a fairly important part with a thriving population of merchants and traders. There is an interesting story which shows us that London was a considerable port and trading centre early in the seventeenth century. James I, the King of England who was father of Charles I, who lost his head, was a great believer in the autocracy and the divine right of kings. He did not like Parliament or the upstart merchants of London and, in his anger, threatened the citizens of London with the removal of his court to Oxford. The Lord Mayor of London was unmoved by this threat and he said that he hoped "His Majesty would be graciously pleased to leave them the Thames!"

It was this rich merchant class of London that backed Parliament and gave it a great deal of money during the struggle with Charles I.

All these industries that had grown up in England were, what is called, cottage or home industries. That is to say the artisans or craftsmen usually worked in their own houses, or in small groups. There were guilds or associations of craftsmen in each trade, not unlike many castes in India, but without the religious element

in caste. The master craftsmen took apprentices and taught them their craft. Weavers had their own looms, spinners their own spinning wheels. Spinning was quite widespread and was the spare time industry of girls and women. Sometimes there were small factories where a number of looms were collected and the weavers worked together. But each weaver worked separately at his loom, and there was really no difference between his working at this loom at home or at some other place in company with other weavers and their looms. The small factory was wholly unlike the modern factory with its big machinery.

This cottage stage of industry flourished not only in England then but all over the world, in every country where there was industry. Thus in India these cottage industries were very advanced. In England cottage industries have almost completely disappeared, but in India there are still many of them. Both the big machine and the cottage loom still flourish side by side in India and you can compare and contrast the two. As you know the cloth we wear is khadi. It is hand-spun and hand woven and is thus entirely a product of the cottages and mud-huts of India. Bapu and our Congress have laid great stress on the development of hand-spinning and have tried to make it the spare time industry of our peasantry who have plenty of time to spare. This indeed was the old spare time industry not only in India but in England and elsewhere.

New mechanical inventions however made a great deal of difference to cottage industries in England. Machines did more and more the work of man and made it easier to produce more with less effort. These inventions began in the middle of the eighteenth century and we shall consider them in our next letter. This letter has grown long enough already.

I have referred briefly to our khadi movement. I do not wish to say much about it here. But I should like to point out to you that this movement or the *charkha* are not meant to compete with the big machine.

Many people fall into this mistake and imagine that the *charkha* means a going back to the middle ages, and the discarding of machines and all that industrialism has brought us. This is all wrong. Our movement is decidedly not against industrialism as such or machines and factories. We want India to have the best of everything and as rapidly as possible. But having regard to existing conditions in India, and especially the terrible poverty of our peasantry, we have urged them to spin in their spare time. Thus not only do they better their own conditions a little, but they help in lessening our dependence on foreign cloth, which has taken so much wealth out of our country.

98

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION BEGINS IN ENGLAND

September 27, 1932

I must now tell you of some of these mechanical inventions which made such a tremendous difference in methods of production. They seem simple enough when we see them now in a mill or factory. But to think of them for the first time and to invent them was a very difficult matter. The first of these inventions came in 1738 when a man named Kay made the flying shuttle for cloth weaving. Before this invention the thread in the shuttle in the weaver's hand had to be carried slowly across and through the other threads placed lengthwise, called the warp. The flying shuttle quickened this process and thus doubled the weaver's output. This meant that the weaver could consume much more yarn. Spinners were hard put to it to supply this additional yarn, and they tried to find some way of increasing their output. This problem was partly solved by the invention by Hargreaves in 1764 of the spinning jenny. Other inventions by Richard Arkwright and others followed; water power was used and later steam power. All these inventions were first applied to the cotton industry, and factories or cotton mills grew up. The next industry to take to the new methods was the woollen industry.

Meanwhile, in 1765, James Watt made his steam engine. This was a great event and the use of steam in factory production followed from it. Coal was now wanted for the new factories and the coal industry therefore developed. The use of coal led to new methods of iron-smelting, that is the melting of the iron ore to

separate the pure metal. The iron industry thereupon grew fast. New factories were built near the coal fields as coal was cheaper there.

Thus three great industries grew up in England—the textile, iron and coal—and factories sprung up in the coal areas and other suitable places. The face of England changed. Instead of the green and pleasant countryside, there grew up in many places these new factories with their long chimneys belching forth smoke and darkening the neighbourhood. They were not beautiful to look at, these factories, surrounded by mountains of coal and heaps of refuse. Nor were the new manufacturing towns, growing around the factories, things of beauty. They were put up anyhow, the only object of the owners being to get on with the making of money. They were ugly and large and dirty, and the starving workers had to put up with these as well as with the terribly unwholesome conditions in the factories.

You may remember my telling you of the squeezing out of the small farmers by the big landowners and the growth of unemployment, resulting in riots and lawlessness in England. The new industries made matters worse to begin with. Agriculture suffered and unemployment increased. Indeed as each new invention came it resulted in replacing manual labour by mechanical devices. This often led to workers being discharged and caused great resentment among them. Many of them came to hate the new machines and they even tried to break them. The machine-wreckers these people were called.

Machine-wrecking has quite a long history in Europe, going back to the sixteenth century, when a simple machine loom was invented in Germany. In an old book written by an Italian priest in 1579 it is stated about this loom that the Town Council of Danzig "being afraid that the invention might throw a large number of the workmen on the streets, had the machine destroyed, and the inventor secretly strangled or drown-

ed!" In spite of this summary way of dealing with the inventor, this machine appeared again in the seventeenth century and there were riots all over Europe because of it. Laws were passed in many places against its use, and it was even publicly burned in the market place. It is possible that if this machine had come into use when it was first invented, other inventions would have followed, and the machine age would have come sooner than it did. But the mere fact that it was not used shows that conditions were not then ripe for it. When these conditions were ripe then machinery established itself inspite of numerous riots in England. It was natural for the workers to feel resentment at the machine. Gradually they came to learn that the fault did not lie with the machine but with the way it was used for the profit of a few persons. Let us go back, however, to the development of the machine and of factories in England.

The new factories swallowed up many of the cottage industries and the private workers. It was not possible for these home workers to compete with the machine. So they had to give up their old crafts and trades and seek employment as wage earners in the very factories they hated, or to join the unemployed. The collapse of the cottage industries was not sudden, but it was rapid enough. By the end of the century, that is by about 1800, the big factories were much in evidence. About thirty years later steam railways began in England with Stephenson's famous engine named the *Rocket*. And so the machine went on advancing all over the country and in almost all departments of industry and life.

It is interesting to note that all the inventors, many of whom I have not mentioned, came from the class of manual workers. It is from this class also that many of the early industrial leaders came. But the result of their inventions and the factory system that followed was to make the gulf between the employer and the worker wider still. The worker in the factory became just a cog in a machine, helpless in the hands of vast

economic forces he could not even understand, much less control. The craftsman and the artisan first sensed that something was wrong when they found that the new factory was competing with them and making and selling articles far cheaper than they could possibly make them with their simple and primitive tools at home. For no fault of theirs they had to shut up their little shops. If they could not carry on with their own crafts much less could they succeed with a new one. So they joined the army of the unemployed and starved. "Hunger", it has been said, "is the drill-sergeant of the factory owner," and hunger ultimately drove them to the new factories to seek employment. The employers showed them little pity. They gave them work indeed, but at a bare pittance, for which the miserable workers had to pour out their life-blood in the factories. Women, and little children even, worked long hours in stifling, unhealthy places till many of them almost fainted and dropped down with fatigue. Men worked right down below in the coal mines the whole long day and did not see the daylight for months at a time.

But do not think that all this was just due to the cruelty of the employers. They were seldom consciously cruel; the fault lay with the system. They were out to increase their business and to conquer distant world markets from other markets and in order to do this they were prepared to put up with anything. The building of new factories and the purchase of machinery costs a lot of money. It is only after the factory begins to produce and these goods are sold in the market, that the money comes back. So these factory owners had to economise in order to build and, even when money came by sale of goods, they went on building more factories. They had got a lead over the other countries of the world because of their early industrialisation and they wanted to profit by this—and indeed they did profit. So in their mad desire to increase their business and make more money they crushed the poor workers whose labour produced the sources of their wealth.

Thus the new system of industry was particularly adapted to the exploitation of the weak by the strong. Right through history we have seen the powerful exploiting the weak. The factory system made this easier. In law there was no slavery but in fact the starving worker, the wage-slave of the factory, was little better than the old slave. The law was all in favour of the employer. Even religion favoured him and told the poor to put up with their miserable lot here in this world and expect a heavenly compensation in the next world! Indeed, the governing classes developed quite a convenient philosophy that the poor were necessary for society and therefore it was quite virtuous to pay low wages. If higher wages were paid the poor would try to have a good time and not work hard enough. It was a comforting and useful way of thinking because it just fitted in with the material interests of the factory owners and the other rich people.

It is very interesting and instructive to read about these times. One learns so much. We can see what tremendous effect the mechanical processes of production have on economics and society. The whole social fabric is upset; new classes come to the front and gain power; the artisan class becomes the wage-earning class in the factory. In addition to this the new economics moulds people's ideas even on religion and morals. The convictions of the mass of mankind run hand in hand with their interests or class feelings, and they take good care, when they have the power to do so, to make laws to protect their own interests. Of course all this is done with every appearance of virtue and with every assurance that the good of mankind is the only motive at the back of the law. We, in India, have enough of pious sentiments from English Viceroys and other officials in India. We are always being told how they labour for the good of India. Meanwhile they govern us with ordinances and bayonets and crush the life-blood out of our people. Our zamindars tell us how they love their tenants, but they do not scruple to squeeze and rack-rent them till

they have nothing left but their starved bodies. Our capitalists and big factory owners also assure us of their good will for their workers, but the good will does not translate itself in better wages or better conditions for the workers. All the profits go to make new palaces, not to improve the mud hut of the worker.

It is amazing how people deceive themselves and others when it is to their interest to do so. So we find the English employers of the eighteenth century and after resisting all attempts to better the lot of their workers. They objected to factory legislation and housing reform, and refused to admit that society had any obligation to remove the causes of distress. They comforted themselves with the thought that it was the idle only who suffered, and in any event they hardly looked upon the workers as human beings like themselves. They developed a new philosophy which is called *laissez-faire*, that is they wanted to do just what they liked in their businesses without any interference from government. By having got factories to make things before other countries had done so, they had got a lead, and all they wanted was a free field to make money. *Laissez-faire* became almost a semi-divine theory which was supposed to give an opportunity to everybody if he could but take advantage of it. Each man and woman was to fight the rest of the world to go ahead, and if many fell in the struggle what did it matter?

In the course of these letters I have told you of the progress of co-operation between man and man, which had been the basis of civilization. But *laissez-faire* and the new capitalism brought the law of the jungle. "Pig philosophy" Carlyle called it. Who laid down this new law of life and business? Not the workers. The poor fellows had little to say in the matter. It was the successful manufacturers at the top who wanted no interference with their success in the name of foolish sentiment. So in the name of liberty and the rights of property they objected even to the compulsory sanitation of private houses and interference with the adultera-

tion of goods.

I have just used the word capitalism. Capitalism of a kind had existed in all countries for a long time, that is to say businesses were carried on with accumulated money. But with the coming of the big machine and industrialism far larger sums of money were required for factory production. "Industrial capital" this was called and the word capitalism is now used to refer to the economic system which grew up after the Industrial Revolution. Under this system capitalists, that is owners of capital, controlled the factories and took the profits. With industrialisation capitalism spread all over the world, except now in the Soviet Union and perhaps one or two other places. From its earliest days capitalism emphasized the difference between the rich and the poor. The mechanisation of industry resulted in much greater production and therefore it produced greater wealth. But this new wealth went to a small group only—the owners of the new industries. The workers remained poor. Very slowly the workers' standards improved in England, largely because of the exploitation of India and other places. But the workers' share in the profits of industry was very small. The Industrial Revolution and capitalism solved the problem of production. They did not solve the problem of the distribution of the new wealth created. So the old tussle between the haves and the have-nots not only remained, but it became acuter.

The Industrial Revolution took place in the second half of the eighteenth century. This was the very period when the British were fighting in India and Canada. It was then that the Seven Years' War took place. These events acted and reacted on each other greatly. The enormous sums of money that the East India Company and its servants (you will remember Clive) extorted out of India after the battle of Plassey and later were of great help in starting the new industries. I have told you earlier in this letter that industrialisation is an expensive job to begin with. It swal-

lows up money without any return for some time. Unless plenty of money is available, either by loan or otherwise, it results in poverty and distress till such time as the industry begins to work and make money. England was extraordinarily fortunate in getting these vast sums of money from India just when she wanted them most for her developing industries and factories.

Having built up these factories new wants arose. The factories wanted raw material to convert it into manufactured articles. Thus cotton was required to make cloth. Even more necessary were new markets where the new goods produced by the factories could be sold. England had got a tremendous lead over other countries by starting factories first. But inspite of this lead she would have had difficulties in finding easy markets. Again India came, very unwillingly, to the rescue. The English in India adopted all manner of devices to ruin Indian industries and force down English cloth on India. I shall say more of this later. Meanwhile it is important to note how the Industrial Revolution in England was helped by the British holding India and forcing it to fit in with their schemes.

Industrialism spread to all parts of the world during the nineteenth century, and capitalist industry developed elsewhere on the general lines laid down in England. Capitalism led inevitably to a new imperialism for everywhere there was a demand for raw materials for manufacture and markets to sell the manufactured goods. The easiest way to have the markets and the raw materials was to take possession of the country. So there was a wild scramble among the more powerful countries for new territories. England, again, with her possession of India and her sea power had a great advantage. But of imperialism and its fruits I shall have to say something later.

With the Industrial Revolution the English world was more and more dominated by the great cloth manufacturers of Lancashire, and the iron-masters and the mine-owners.

99

AMERICA BREAKS AWAY FROM ENGLAND

October 2, 1932

We shall now consider the second great revolution of the eighteenth century—the revolt of the American colonies against England. This was a political revolution only and not so vital as the Industrial Revolution, which we have been studying, or the French Revolution, which was to follow it soon and shake the social foundations of Europe. And yet this political change in America was important and destined to bear great results. The American colonies which became free then have grown to-day into the most powerful, the richest, and industrially, the most advanced country in the world.

Do you remember the "Mayflower", the ship that took a batch of Protestants from England to America in 1620? They did not like the autocracy of James I; nor did they like his religion. So these people, since then called the "Pilgrim Fathers", shook the dust of England from off their feet and went to the strange new land across the Atlantic Ocean, to found a colony where they would have greater freedom. They landed in the north and called the place New Plymouth. Colonists had gone before them to other parts of the North American coast line. Many others followed them, till there were little colonies dotted all over the east coast from north to south. There were Catholic colonies, and colonies founded by cavalier nobles from England, and Quaker colonies—Pennsylvania is named after the Quaker Penn. There were also Dutchmen, and Germans and Danes and some Frenchmen. They were a mixed lot, but by far the greater number of them were

the English colonists. The Dutch founded a town and called it New Amsterdam. When the English took this later they changed the name to New York—so well known now.

The English colonists continued to acknowledge the British King and Parliament. Many of them had left their homes because they were discontented with their lot there and did not approve of much that the King or Parliament did. But they had no desire to break away. The southern colonies, consisting of cavaliers and supporters of the King, were even more attached to England. The colonies lived their separate lives and had little in common with each other. By the eighteenth century there were thirteen colonies on the east coast, all under British control. To the north was Canada; to the south Spanish territory. The Dutch and Danish and other settlements in these thirteen colonies had all been swallowed up by them and were under British control. But remember that the colonies were along the coast only and some distance inland. Beyond them, to the west, lay vast territories stretching right up to the Pacific Ocean, nearly ten times the size of the thirteen colonies. These territories were not occupied by any European colonists. They were inhabited by, and were under the control of, various tribes or nations of Red Indians. The chief of these were the Iroquois.

In the middle of the century there was, as you will remember, a world-wide struggle between England and France. This was known as the Seven Years' War (1756 to 1763), and it was waged not only in Europe but in India and Canada. England won and France had to give up Canada to her. France was thus eliminated from America and England controlled all the settlements in North America. Only in the province of Quebec in Canada was there any French population; otherwise the settlements were predominantly English. Quebec strange to say, is still an island of French language and culture, surrounded by an Anglo-Saxon population. Montreal (from Mont Royal), the big-

gest city of Quebec province, has, I believe, more French speaking people in it than any city other than Paris.

I have told you, in an earlier letter, of the slave trade that was carried on by European countries to bring negro workers from Africa to America. This terrible and ghastly trade was largely in the hands of the Spanish, Portuguese and English. Labour was needed in America, especially in the southern States where large tobacco plantations had grown up. The people of the country, the so-called Red Indians, were nomads and did not like to settle down; besides, they refused to work under conditions of slavery. They would not bend; they preferred to be broken, and broken they were in subsequent years. They were practically exterminated and they died off under the new conditions. There are not many left to-day of these people who once inhabited a whole continent.

As the Red Indians would not work in the plantations, and labour was badly needed, the unhappy people of Africa were captured in horrible man-hunts and sent across the seas in a manner the cruelty of which is almost beyond belief. These African Negroes were taken to the southern States—Virginia, Carolina and Georgia—and made to work in gangs on the large plantations, chiefly of tobacco.

In the northern States conditions were different. The old puritan traditions brought over by the Pilgrim Fathers in the "Mayflower" still flourished. There were compact farms, and no such huge plantations as in the south. Slaves, or large numbers of workers, were not needed for these farms. As there was no lack of new land every person tended to become his own master by having his own farm. So a feeling of equality grew among the settlers.

Thus we find two economic systems growing up in these colonies, one in the north based on small farms and some notions of equality, the other in the south based on large plantations and slavery. The Red Indian had no place in either of these. So these people, who were the

original inhabitants of the continent, were pressed back slowly to the west. This process was made easier by the quarrels and divisions among the Red Indians themselves.

The English King and many big landowners in England had large interests in these colonies, especially in the south. They tried to exploit them as much as possible. After the Seven Years' War a special effort was made to get money out of the American colonies. The English Parliament, dominated as it was by landowners, was willing enough to exploit the colonies and it backed the King. Taxation was imposed and restrictions on trade. You will remember that in India also at this time an intensive exploitation was begun by the British in Bengal, and all manner of obstacles were put in the way of Indian trade.

The colonists objected to these restrictions and to the new taxation, but the English government felt strong and confident after their victory in the Seven Years' War and cared little for their objections. The Seven Years' War had, however, taught the colonists many things also. People from different colonies or States met each other and got to know each other. They fought with regular English troops against the French troops, and so became familiar with fighting and the ghastly game of war. So, on their side also, the colonists were in no mood to submit to what they considered an injustice and a wrong to them.

Matters came to a head in 1773 when the British government sought to force the East India Company's tea on them. Many of the rich people in England held shares in the East India Company and were thus interested in its fortunes. The government was under their influence, and probably the members of the government themselves were interested in the East India trade. So government tried to encourage the business of the East India Company by making it easy for it to take its tea to America and sell it there. But this caused injury to the local colonial tea trade and was much resented. It

was decided therefore to boycott this foreign tea. In December, 1773, when an attempt was made to land the East India Company's tea at Boston, this was resisted. Some of the colonists disguised themselves as Red Indians, went on board the cargo vessels and threw the tea overboard. This was done publicly before a large sympathetic crowd. It was a challenge which led to war between the rebellious colonies and England.

History never repeats itself exactly, and yet it is strange how near it comes to it sometimes. This incident of throwing over-board of the tea at Boston in 1773 has become very famous. It is called the "Boston tea party." When Bapu, two and a half years ago, started his salt campaign and the great march to Dandi, and the salt raids, many people in America thought of their "Boston tea party" and compared the new "salt party" to it. But of course there was a great deal of difference between the two.

A year and a half later, in 1775, war began between England and her American colonies. What were the colonies fighting for? Not independence, not to cut away from England. Even when fighting had begun and blood had been shed on both sides, the leaders of the colonists continued to address George III of England as their "Most Gracious Sovereign" and to consider themselves as his faithful subjects. It is most interesting to notice this as you will find the same thing happening often enough. In Holland, Philip II of Spain was called sovereign, although bitter warfare was being carried on against his armies. It was only after many years of fighting that Holland was forced to declare her independence. In India after many years of doubt and hesitation, and dallying with the idea of Dominion Status and the like, our National Congress declared on the 1st January, 1930, in favour of independence. Even now there are some people who seem to be afraid of the idea of independence and talk of dominion rule in India. But history teaches us, and the examples of Holland and America are clear enough, that the end of such a struggle

can only be independence.

In 1774, a little before war began between the colonies and England, Washington stated that no thinking man in all North America desired independence. And yet Washington was to be the first president of the American Republic! In 1774, after the war had begun, forty-six leading members of the Colonial Congress addressed King George III as his faithful subjects and pleaded for peace and the cessation of the "effusion of blood" already shed. They were ardently desirous of restoring harmony and good will between England and her American children. All they ask for is some kind of dominion government, and they declare, in Washington's words, that no thinking man wanted independence. This was called the "Olive Branch Petition." How familiar the language is! One hears it often enough in India to-day.

But in less than a year twenty-five of the signatories of this petition had signed another document—the Declaration of Independence.

So the colonies did not begin fighting for the sake of independence. Their grievances were taxation and restrictions on trade. They denied the right of the British Parliament to tax them against their will. "No taxation without representation" was their famous cry, and they were not represented in the British Parliament.

The colonists had no army, but they had a vast country to retire and fall back whenever necessary. They built up an army, and Washington ultimately became their Commander-in-Chief. They had a few successes and, thinking perhaps that the time was a favourable one for a fling at the old enemy, England, France joined the colonies. Spain also declared war against England. The odds were against England now, but the war dragged on for many years. In 1776 came the famous "Declaration of Independence" of the colonies. In 1782 the war ended, and the Peace of Paris between the warring countries was signed in 1783.

So the thirteen American colonies became an independent republic—the United States of America as they were called. But for long each State was jealous of the others and considered itself more or less independent. Only gradually came the feeling of a common nationality. It was a vast country, continually spreading west-wards. It was the first great republic of the modern world—tiny Switzerland being the only other real republic at the time. Holland although republican, was controlled by the aristocracy. England was not only a monarchy but its Parliament was in the hands of the small rich landowning class. So the United States Republic was a new kind of country. It had no past, as the countries of Europe and Asia had. It had no relics of feudalism, except in the plantation system and slavery in the south. It had not hereditary nobility. The bourgeoisie or middle class had thus few obstacles to its growth, and it grew rapidly. Its population at the time of the war of independence was less than four millions. Two years ago, in 1930, it was nearly 123 millions.

George Washington became the first president of the United States. He was a great landowner from the State of Virginia. Other great men of this period, who are considered the founders of the republic, are Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, Adams and James Madison. Benjamin Franklin was a specially distinguished man, and was a great scientist. By flying boys' kites he showed that the lightning in the clouds was the same thing as electricity.

The Declaration of Independence of 1776 stated that "all men are born equal." This is hardly a correct statement, if analysed, for some are weak and some are strong, some are more intelligent and capable than others. But the idea behind the statement is clear enough and praiseworthy. The colonists wanted to get rid of the feudal inequalities of Europe. That in itself was a very great advance. Probably many of the framers of the

Declaration of Independence were influenced by the philosophers and thinkers of eighteenth century France, from Voltaire and Rousseau onwards.

"All men are born equal"—and yet there was the poor negro, a slave with few rights! What of him? How did he fit in with the constitution? He did not fit in, and he has not yet fitted in. Many years later there was a bitter civil war between the northern and southern States, and as a result slavery was abolished. But the negro problem still continues in America.

100

THE FALL OF THE BASTILLE

October 7, 1932

We have now considered very briefly two of the revolutions of the eighteenth century. In this letter I shall tell you something of the third revolution—the French Revolution. Of the three this one in France created the most stir. The Industrial Revolution which began in England was a vastly important one, but it crept on gradually and was almost unnoticed by most people. Few realised at the time its real significance. The French Revolution, on the other hand, burst suddenly on an astonished Europe, like a thunderbolt. Europe was still under a host of monarchs and emperors. The ancient Holy Roman Empire had long ceased to function, but it existed on paper still and its ghost cast a long shadow over Europe. In this world of kings and emperors and courts and palaces, there came, out of the depths of the common people, this strange and terrifying creature, which paid no attention to moss-grown custom or privilege, and which hurled a king from his throne and threatened others with a like fate. Is it surprising that the kings and all the privileged people of Europe trembled before this revolt of the masses, whom they had so long ignored and crushed?

The French Revolution burst like a volcano. And yet revolutions and volcanoes do not burst out suddenly without reason or long evolution. We see the sudden burst and are surprised; but underneath the surface of the earth many forces play against each other for long ages, and the fires gather together, till the crust on the surface can hold them down no longer, and they burst

forth in mighty flames shooting up to the sky, and molten lava rolls down the mountain side. Even so the forces that ultimately break out in revolution play for long under the surface of society. Water boils when you heat it; but you know that it has reached boiling point only after getting hotter and hotter.

Ideas and economic conditions make revolutions. Foolish people in authority, blind to everything that does not fit in with their ideas, imagine that revolutions are caused by agitators. Agitators are people who are discontented with existing conditions and desire a change and work for it. Every revolutionary period has its full supply of them; they are themselves the outcome of the ferment and dissatisfaction that exists. But tens and hundreds of thousands of people do not move to action merely at the bidding of an agitator. Most people desire security above everything; they do not want to risk losing what they have got. But when economic conditions are such that their day to day suffering grows and life becomes almost an intolerable burden, then even the weak are prepared to take risks. It is then that they listen to the voice of the agitator who seems to show them a way out of their misery.

In many of my letters I have told you of the distress of the people and of peasant risings. In every country of Asia and Europe there have been these revolts of the peasantry often resulting in much bloodshed and in cruel repression. Their distress drove the peasantry to revolutionary action, but usually they had no clear ideas of their goal. Because of this vagueness in thought, this want of an ideology, their efforts often ended in failure. In the French Revolution we find a new thing, at any rate on such a big scale—the union of ideas with the economic urge for revolutionary action. Where there is such a union, there is the real revolution, and a real revolution affects the whole fabric of life and society—political, social, economic and religious. We find this happening in France in the last years of the eighteenth century.

I have told you already of the luxury and incompetence and corruption of the French kings and the grinding poverty of the common people. Economic conditions were thus inevitably leading up to a burst-up. I have also told you something of the ferment in the minds of the French people; of the new ideas set going by Voltaire and Rousseau and Montesquieu and many others. So we had the two processes—economic distress and the formation of an ideology—going on together and acting and re-acting on each other. It takes a long time to build up the ideology of a people, for new ideas have to filter down gradually to them, and few persons are eager to give up their old prejudices and notions. It so happens, often enough, that by the time a new ideology is established and the people have at last succeeded in accepting a new set of ideas, these ideas themselves are somewhat out of date. It is interesting to notice that the ideas of the French philosophers of the eighteenth century were based on the pre-industrial age in Europe; and yet at that very time almost the Industrial Revolution was beginning in England and this was changing industry and life so much that in reality it was knocking out the bottom from many of the new French theories. The Industrial Revolution really developed later on and the French philosophers could not of course guess what was going to happen. Yet their ideas, on which to a large extent the French Revolution based its ideology, were out of date with the coming of big industry.

However that might be, it is clear that these ideas and theories of the French philosophers had a very powerful effect on the Revolution. There had previously been many instances of masses in action in risings and revolts; now we had a remarkable instance of conscious masses in action, or rather consciously guided masses in action. Hence the importance of this great revolution in France.

I have told you that Louis XV succeeded his great-grandfather Louis XIV in 1715 and reigned for 59 years.

He is reported to have said: *Après moi le déluge,** and he acted accordingly. Merrily he sent his country to the abyss. He took no lesson from the British Revolution and the beheading of the English King. In 1774 he was succeeded by his grandson, Louis XVI, a very foolish and brainless man. His wife was Marie Antoinette, a sister of the Hapsburgh Austrian Emperor. She was also very foolish but she had a kind of obstinate strength and Louis XVI was entirely under her thumb. She was even more full of the idea of the "divine right of kings" than Louis, and she hated the common people. Between the two of them, wife and husband, they did everything to make the idea of monarchy hateful to the people. The French people, even after the beginning of the Revolution, were not clear on the question of the monarchy, but Louis and Marie Antoinette by their actions and follies made the republic inevitable. And yet wiser people than they were could have done little. Even so the Czar and Czarina of Russia behaved with amazing folly on the eve of the Russian Revolution of 1917. It is curious how these people become even more foolish as the crisis deepens, and thus help in their own destruction. There is a famous Latin saying which just fits them—*quem deus perdere vult, prius dementat,* whom God wishes to destroy he first makes mad. There is an almost exact equivalent in Sanskrit—*Vināsh kāle viparit buddhī.*

One of the props of monarchy and dictatorship has often been military glory. Whenever there is trouble at home a king or a government clique is attracted towards military adventure abroad to distract peoples' minds. But in France the result of the military adventures had been bad. The Seven Years' War had meant defeat for France and was thus a blow to the monarchy. Bankruptcy came nearer and nearer. The French participation in the American War of Independence meant more expenditure. Where was all this money to

*After me the deluge.

come from? The nobles and priests were privileged and exempt from most taxes and they had no intention of giving up their privileges. Yet money must be raised not only to pay debts but for the extravagances of the court. What of the masses, the common people? I shall give you a description of them from Carlyle, an English writer on the French Revolution. He has a peculiar style, which you will notice, but he is often very effective in his pen pictures.

> "With the working people again, it is not well. Unlucky! For there are from twenty to twenty-five millions of them. Whom, however, we lump together into a kind of dim compendious unity, monstrous but dim, far off, as the canaille; or, more humanely, as "the masses." Masses indeed; and yet singular to say, if, with an effort of imagination, thou follow them, over broad France, into their clay hovels, into their garrets and hutches, the masses consist all of units. Every unit of whom has his own heart and sorrows; stands covered there with his own skin, and if you pinch him he will bleed."

How well the description fits, not only the France of 1789, but the India of 1932! Do not many of us lump together the 'masses' of India, the scores of millions of peasants and workers, and think of them as some unhappy ungainly beast? Beasts of burden they have been for many a long day and still are. We 'sympathise' with them and talk patronisingly of doing them good. And yet we hardly think of them as individuals and human beings, not very unlike us. It is well to remember that in their mud huts they have their separate lives and feel hunger and cold and pain like all of us. Many of our politicians, learned in the law, think and talk of constitutions and the like, forgetting the human beings for whom constitutions and laws are made. Politics for the dwellers of our millions of mud huts and town slums means food for the hungry and clothing and shelter.

So stood France under Louis XVI. Right at the beginning of his reign there were hunger riots. For several years these continued, and there was a gap, followed later by fresh peasant risings. During one of

these food riots at Dijon, the Governor told the starving people: "The grass has sprouted, go to the fields and browse on it!" Vast numbers of people became professional beggars. It was officially declared that in 1777 there were eleven lakhs of beggars in France. How India comes inevitably to our minds when we think of this poverty and misery!

The peasants were not only hungry for food, but were also hungry for land. Under the feudal system the nobles were lords of the land and to them went a great part of the income from it. The peasants had no clear ideas, no clear goal, but they wanted to own their land and they hated this feudal system which crushed them, they hated the nobles, and the clergy, and (think of India again!) the *gabelle* or salt tax, which was especially felt by the poor.

Such was the condition of the peasantry, and yet the King and Queen clamoured for money. The government had no money to spend and debts grew. Marie Antoinette was nick-named "Madame Déficit." There was no way of raising more money. At last, Louis XVI, at his wits' end, summoned the States-General in May, 1789. This body consisted of the representatives of the three classes, or estates of the realm as they were called: nobles, clergy, commons. In composition it was thus not unlike the British Parliament with its House of Lords, consisting of nobles and clergy, and the House of Commons. But there were many differences between the two. The British Parliament had been meeting more or less regularly for some hundreds of years and had got well established with traditions and rules and methods of doing work. The States-General seldom met and had no traditions. Both bodies represented the upper classes, the British House of Commons even more so than the Commons in the States-General. The peasantry were nowhere represented.

On the 4th May, 1789, the States-General was opened by the King at Versailles. But soon the King was sorry that he ever called these representatives of the

three estates together. The third estate, that is the Commons or the middle classes, began to take the bit into its teeth and insist that no taxation could be levied without its consent. They had the example of England before them, where the Commons' House had established this right. The recent American example was also before them. They thought, very mistakenly, that England was a free country. As a matter of fact this was a delusion, as England was controlled and governed by the aristocratic and land-owning classes. Parliament itself was a monopoly of theirs, owing to the very limited franchise, that is the right to vote.

However, whatever little the Third Estate or the Commons did was too much for King Louis. He had them turned out of the hall. The deputies had no intention of going away. They met immediately on a tennis court near by, and took an oath not to disperse till they had established a constitution. This is known as the Oath of the Tennis Court. Then came the critical moment when the King tried force and his own soldiers refused to obey his orders. Always in a revolution the crisis comes when the army, which is the main prop of government, refuses to fire on their brethren in the crowd. Louis was frightened and he gave in, and then, in his own very foolish way, intrigued to get foreign regiments to shoot down his own people. This was too much for the people and, on the memorable 14th of July, 1789, they rose in Paris and captured the old prison of the Bastille and set free the prisoners.

The fall of the Bastille is a great event in history. It began the revolution; it was a signal for popular risings all over the country; it meant the end of the old order in France, of feudalism and grand monarchy and privilege; it was a terrible and terrifying portent for all the kings and emperors of Europe. France, which had set the fashion in grand monarchs, was now setting a new fashion and Europe was amazed. Some looked at the deed with fear and trembling, but many saw hope in it and the promise of a better day. The fourteenth of

July is still the day of the Fête Nationale of France, and every year it is celebrated all over the country.

The fourteenth of July saw the Bastille fall to the mob of Paris. Yet, so blind often are those in authority, that on the evening before, on the 13th, there was a royal fête at Versailles. There was dancing and singing and toasts were drunk, before the King and Queen, to the coming victory over rebellious Paris. It is strange how extraordinary was the hold of the idea of the monarchy in Europe. We, in the present age, have got used to republics and hardly take kings seriously. The few kings that remain in the world behave very circumspectly lest worse befall them. Even so, most people are opposed to the idea of monarchy, as it keeps up class divisions and encourages the spirit of exclusion and snobbery. But this was not so in eighteenth century Europe. For the people of those days a country without a king was a little difficult to imagine. So it happened that in spite of Louis's folly and attempted defiance, there was yet no talk of deposing him. For nearly two years more they put up with him and his intrigues, and it was only when he tried to run away and was caught, that France decided to do without a king.

But that was to be later. Meanwhile the States-General became the National Assembly, and the King was supposed to have become a constitutional or limited monarch, that is a king who did what he was told to do by the Assembly. But he hated this, and Marie Antoinette hated it still more, and the people of Paris did not love them over-much and suspected them of all manner of intrigues. Versailles, where the King and Queen held court at the time, was too far from Paris for the people of the capital to keep eye on them. Tales and rumours of feasting and luxury at Versailles also excited the hungry people of Paris. So the King and Queen were taken to the Tuileries in Paris in one of the strangest of processions.

This letter has already exceeded its allotted span. I shall continue the story of the Revolution in my next.

101

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

October 10, 1932

I find it a little difficult to write to you about the French Revolution. This is not for any lack of material, but because of the very abundance of it. The Revolution was an amazing and an everchanging drama, full of extraordinary incidents that still fascinate us and horrify and thrill. The politics of princes and statesmen have their home in the closet and the private room, and an air of mystery covers them. A discreet veil hides many sins, and decorous language conceals the conflict of rival ambitions and greed. Even when this conflict leads to war and vast numbers of young people are sent to their death for the sake of this greed and ambition, our ears are not offended by mention of any such lowly motives. We are told, instead, of noble ideals and great causes which demand the last sacrifice.

But a revolution is very different. It has its home in the field and the street and the market place, and its methods are rough and coarse. The people who make it have not had the advantage of the education of the princes and the statesmen. Their language is not courtly and decorous, hiding a multitude of intrigues and evil designs. There is no mystery about them, no veils to hide the working of their minds; even their bodies have little enough covering. Politics in a revolution cease to be the sport of kings or professional politicians. They deal with realities, and behind them is raw human nature and the empty stomachs of the hungry.

So we see in France, during these fateful five years from 1789 to 1794, the hungry masses in action. It is they who force the hands of timid politicians and make

them abolish monarchy and feudalism and the privileges of the Church. It is they who pay homage to the terrible Madame Guillotine and take cruel vengeance against those who had crushed them in the past and those whom they suspect of intriguing against their new-found freedom. It is these ragged, bare-footed people who, with improvised arms, rush to defend their Revolution on the battlefield, and drive back the trained armies of a Europe united against them. They achieve wonders, these people of France, but after several years of terrible strain and conflict, the Revolution exhausts its energy and turns on itself and begins to eat up its own children. And then comes the counter-revolution, swallowing up the Revolution, and sending the common people who had dared and suffered so much, back to be ruled by the "superior" classes. Out of the counter-revolution emerges Napoleon, dictator and Emperor. But neither the counter-revolution nor Napoleon could send back the people to their old places. No one could wipe away the principal conquests of the Revolution; and no one could take away from the French people, and indeed the other peoples of Europe, the passionate memory of the days when the under-dog cast off his yoke, even though for a while only.

There were many parties and groups fighting for mastery in the early days of the Revolution. There were the royalists, indulging in the vain hope of keeping Louis XVI as an absolute king; the moderate liberals wanting a constitution and prepared to keep the king as a limited monarch; the moderate republicans, called the party of the Gironde; and the extremer republicans, named the Jacobins, because they used to meet in the hall of the Jacobin Convent. These were the main groups, and among them all, and outside them, were many adventurers. Behind all these groups and individuals were the masses of France, and especially of Paris, acting under many an unknown leader from their own ranks. In foreign countries, especially in England, there were the émigrés, the French nobles who had run

away from the Revolution and were continually intriguing against it. All the Powers of Europe were ranged against revolutionary France. Parliamentary but aristocratic England, as well as the kings and emperors of the Continent, were equally afraid of this strange eruption of the common man and tried to crush it.

The royalists and the King intrigued and only brought their own ruin nearer. The party which was most important at first in the National Assembly was that of the moderate liberals, who wanted a constitution somewhat after the fashion of England and America. Their leader was Mirabeau, a name which is already familiar to you. For nearly two years they were in power in the Assembly and, flushed with the success of the first days of the Revolution, they made many brave declarations and brought about some important changes. Twenty days after the fall of the Bastille, on August 4, 1789, there was a dramatic scene in the Assembly. The subject before the Assembly was the abolition of feudal rights and privileges. There was something in the air of France then which went to the heads of the people, and even the feudal lords seem to have been intoxicated for a while by the new wine of freedom. Great nobles and leaders of the Church got up in the Assembly chamber, and vied with each other in giving up their feudal rights and special privileges. It was an honest and generous gesture, though it did not have much effect for some years. Sometimes, but rarely, such generous impulses move a privileged class; or perhaps it may be that a realisation comes to it that the end of privilege is near and a virtuous generosity is the best course. Only a few days ago we saw a wonderful gesture of this kind made by the caste Hindus in India when Bapu fasted to remove untouchability and, as if by a magician's wand, a wave of feeling passed through the land. The chains that Hindus had placed over many of their brethren fell from them in some measure, and a thousand doors that had been closed to these untouchables for ages, opened out to them.

So in a flush of enthusiasm the National Assembly of revolutionary France abolished, by resolution at least, serfdom and privileges and feudal courts and the exemption of nobles and clergy from taxation, and even titles. It was strange that although the King still remained, the nobility lost their titles.

The Assembly then went on to pass a Declaration of the Rights of Man. The idea for this famous declaration was probably taken from the American Declaration of Independence. But the American declaration is short and simple, the French one long and rather complicated. The Rights of Man were the rights which were supposed to ensure him equality and liberty and happiness. Very brave and daring seemed this Declaration of the Rights of Man at the time, and for nearly a hundred years afterwards it was the charter of the liberals and democrats of Europe. And yet to-day it is out of date and does not solve any of the problems of our time. It took a long time for people to discover that mere equality before the law and the possession of a vote do not ensure real equality or liberty or happiness, and that those in power have other ways of exploiting them still. Political thought has advanced or changed much since the days of the French Revolution, and probably most of the conservatives even to-day would accept the high-sounding principles of the Declaration of the Rights of Man. But that does not mean, as all of us can find out without much trouble, that they are prepared to grant real equality and freedom. This Declaration indeed protected private property. The estates of the big nobles and the Church were confiscated for other reasons relating to feudal rights and special privileges. But the right to own property itself was considered a sacred and inviolable one. As you perhaps know, advanced political thought now considers that private property is an evil and should, as far as possible, be abolished.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man may seem to us to-day a commonplace document. The brave ideals of yesterday often enough become the common-

places of to-day. But at the time it was proclaimed it sent a thrill through Europe, and it seemed to carry the fair promise of a better day to all who suffered and were down-trodden. But the King did not like it; he was amazed at this blasphemy, and he refused to sanction it. He was still at Versailles. It was then that the Paris mob, led by the women, came to the Versailles palace and not only made the King sanction the Declaration, but forced him to go to Paris. It was this strange procession to which I referred at the end of my last letter.

The Assembly brought about many other useful reforms. The vast property of the Church was confiscated by the State. A new division of France was made into eighty departments, and this division, I believe, still exists. Better law courts, to take the place of the old feudal courts, were set up. All this was to the good, but it did not go far enough. It did not benefit much the peasantry who hungered for land or the common people in the towns who hungered for bread. The Revolution seemed to have been arrested. As I have told you, the masses, the peasantry and the common people of the towns, were not represented in the Assembly at all. The Assembly was controlled by the middle classes, under the leadership of Mirabeau; and as soon as they felt that they had gained their objects, they tried their best to stop the Revolution. They even began to ally themselves to King Louis and to shoot down the peasantry in the provinces. Their leader, Mirabeau, actually became the secret adviser of the King. And the common people, who had stormed and captured the Bastille and thought that they had thereby cast aside their chains, wondered what had happened. Their freedom seemed to be as far off as ever, and the new National Assembly was sitting on them almost in the manner of the old lords.

Foiled in the Assembly, the people of Paris, which was the heart of the Revolution, found another outlet for their revolutionary energy. This was the Commune or municipality of Paris. Not only the Commune, but

each section of the city, which returned several members to the Commune, had a living organisation, in direct touch with the masses. The Commune, and the sections especially, became the standard-bearers of the Revolution and the rivals of the moderate and middle class Assembly.

Meanwhile the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille came round, and the people of Paris held a great fête on the 14th July. The Fête of the Federation it was called; and the common people of Paris gave their labour freely to decorate the city, for they felt that the fête was theirs.

So the Revolution stood in 1790 and 1791. The Assembly had lost all its revolutionary ardour and had had enough of changes; but the people of Paris were still simmering with revolutionary energy, the peasantry still looking hungrily at the land. Matters could not continue for long in this way; either the Revolution was to go ahead or to die down. Mirabeau, the moderate leader, died early in 1791. In spite of his secret intrigues with the King he was popular with the people and kept them in check. On June 21, 1791, an event took place which decided the fate of the Revolution. This was the flight of King Louis and Marie Antoinette in disguise. They almost managed to reach the frontier. But some peasants recognised them at Varennes, near Verdun, and they were stopped and brought back to Paris.

This act of the King and Queen sealed their fate so far as the people of Paris were concerned. The idea of the republic now grew rapidly, and yet so moderate and so far removed from public sentiment was the Assembly and the government of the day, that they continued to shoot down people who demanded that Louis be dethroned. Marat, one of the great figures of the Revolution, was hunted by the authorities because he denounced the King, after his flight, as a traitor. He had to hid in the sewers of Paris and contracted a terrible skin disease there.

Still, strange to say, Louis continued in theory as King for over a year more. In September 1791 the National Assembly finished its career and gave place to the Legislative Assembly. This was as moderate as the other and was representative only of the upper classes. It did not represent the rising fever of France. This fever of revolution spread among the people and the extreme republicans, the Jacobins, who came from the people, grew in strength.

Meanwhile the Powers of Europe were looking at these strange happenings in alarm. For a while Prussia and Austria and Russia were busy with booty elsewhere. They were putting an end to the old kingdom of Poland, but events in France were marching too far ahead and claimed their attention. In 1792 France was at war with Austria and Prussia. Austria, I might inform you, was now in possession of the Belgian part of the Netherlands, and this had a common frontier with France. Foreign armies advanced into French territory and defeated the French troops. The King was supposed, not without reason, to be in league with them, and all royalists were suspected of treachery. As the dangers grew round them, the people of France grew more and more inflamed and panicky. They saw spies and traitors everywhere. The revolutionary Commune of Paris took the lead at this crisis, hoisted the Red Flag to signify that the people had proclaimed Martial Law against the rebellion of the Court, and on August 10, 1792, ordered an attack on the King's palace. The King had them shot down by his Swiss guards. But the victory lay with the people, and the Commune forced the Assembly to depose the King and imprison him.

The Red Flag, as everybody knows, is now the flag of the workers everywhere, of socialism and communism. Formerly it used to be the official flag to proclaim martial law against the people. I imagine, but I am not sure, that the use of this flag by the Paris Commune was the first use of it on behalf of the people, and it was from this that gradually it developed into the workers' flag.

The deposition and imprisonment of the King were not enough. The people of Paris, inflamed at the action of the Swiss guards in shooting and killing many of them, and full of fear and anger at traitors and spies, went about arresting the people whom they suspected and filling the prisons with them. Many of those arrested were no doubt guilty, but many innocent persons were also arrested and imprisoned. Some days later another fierce wave of passion came over the people, and they brought out their prisoners from the prisons and, after a mock trial, killed most of them. Over a thousand persons were killed in these "September massacres," as they are called. This was the first taste of blood on a large scale which the Paris mob got. Much more blood was to flow before the thirst for it was satiated.

In September also occurred the first victory of the French troops over the invading Austrians and Prussians. This was at the little battle of Valmy, small in itself but with big results, for it saved the Revolution.

On September 21, 1792, the National Convention met. This was a new body taking the place of the Assembly. It was more advanced than the two Assemblies that had gone before it, but it still lagged behind the Commune. The first thing that the Convention did was to proclaim a republic. The trial of Louis XVI came soon after; he was condemned to death, and on January 21, 1793, he had to pay with his head for the sins of the monarchy. He was guillotined, that is beheaded by the guillotine. The people of France had now burned their boats behind them. They had taken the final step and defied the kings and emperors of Europe. There was no going back for them, and from the very steps of the guillotine, which was still covered with a king's blood, Danton, a great leader of the Revolution, addressed the assembled crowds and hurled his challenge at these other kings. "The kings of Europe would challenge us," he cried; "we throw them the head of a king!"

REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION

October 13, 1932

King Louis was gone. But even before his death France had undergone an amazing change. The blood of her people was afire with the fever of revolution; their veins tingled and a flaming enthusiasm took possession of them. Republican France was at bay; the rest of Europe, kingly Europe, was against her. Republican France would show these effete kings and princes how patriots warmed by the sun of liberty could fight. They would fight not only for their own newly won freedom but for the freedom of all others who were oppressed by kings and nobles. To the nations of Europe the French people sent their message, calling upon them to rise against their rulers, and declaring themselves the friends of all peoples and the enemies of all kingly governments. France, *la patrie,* became the mother of freedom, at whose altar it was a joy to sacrifice. And in this hour of fierce enthusiasm there came to them a wonderful song, in tune with their flaming mood, making them rush forward singing to the battle front and leap over all obstacles, reckless of the odds. This was Rouget de Lisle's war song for the army of the Rhine, known since then as the *Marseillaise,* and even now the national song of the French.

Allons, enfants de la patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé!
Contre nous de la tyrannie
L'étendard sanglant est levé.
Entendez-vous dans les campagnes,
Mugir ces féroces soldats?

Ils viennent jusque dans nos bras
Egorger nos fils, nos compagnes!
Aux armes, citoyens! formez vos bataillons!
*Marchons, marchons, qu'un sang impur abreuve nos sillons!**

They did not sing futile songs about long life to kings. Instead they sang of the sacred love of the motherland, and of liberty, beloved liberty.

Amour sacré de la patrie,
Conduis, soutiens nos bras vengeurs!
Liberté, liberté chérie,
Combats avec tes défenseurs!†

There were terrible privations. There was not food enough or clothing or boots or shoes or even arms. Citizens in many places were asked to give up their boots and shoes for the army; patriots gave up many kinds of food which were scarce and were needed by the army; some even fasted frequently. Leather and kitchen utensils and frying pans and buckets and many other household articles were requisitioned. And in the streets of Paris there was a hammering at many a forge for the common people, all the *citoyens* and *citoyennes*, were helping even in the manufacture of arms. There were great privations; but what did it matter when France, *la patrie*, beautiful France in her rags but with the crown of free-

Translation: *Come! Children of the Motherland,
The day of glory has arrived!
Against us the bloody standard
Of tyranny is raised.
Do you not hear these ferocious soldiers
Bellowing in the countryside?
They come to butcher, even in our arms,
Our sons and our wives.
To arms! Citizens! Form your batallions!
March on, march on!
Let their impure blood water our fields!

†O thou sacred love of the Motherland!
Lead on, sustain our avenging arms!
O Liberty, beloved Liberty!
Fight on the side of thy defenders!

dom on her head, was in danger, and the enemy was at her gate? So the youth of France rushed to her rescue and, careless of hunger or thirst, marched to victory. "Seldom," says Carlyle, "do we find that a whole people can be said to have any Faith at all; except in things that it can eat and handle. Whensoever it gets any Faith, its history becomes spirit-stirring, note-worthy." This faith in a great cause came to the men and women of the Revolution, and the history they made in those memorable days, and the sacrifices they endured, have still the power of stirring us and quickening our pulse.

These revolutionary armies of new recruits, half-trained as they were, drove out all foreign troops from French soil and then freed the lower Netherlands (Belgium, etc.) from the Austrians. For the last time the Hapsburghs left the Netherlands to return no more. The trained professional armies of Europe could not face these revolutionary recruits. The trained soldier fought for pay and fought cautiously; the revolutionary recruit fought for an ideal and was prepared to take great risks to win. The former moved slowly with a mountain of baggage, the latter had little to carry and moved rapidly. The revolutionary armies were thus a new type in war and they fought with a new technique. They changed the old methods of warfare and became, to some extent, the models for the armies of the next hundred years in Europe. But the real strength of these armies lay in their enthusiasm and their audacity. For their motto, and indeed for the motto of the Revolution itself at this stage, we can give Danton's famous phrase: "*Pour vaincre les ennemis de la patrie il nous faut de l'audace, encore de l'audace et toujours de l'audace.*"*

The war spread. England became a powerful enemy because of her navy. Republican France had built up a great land army but on the sea she was weak. England started a blockade of all French ports. From England

*"In order to vanquish the enemies of the Motherland we must have audacity, still more audacity, always audacity."

also the French émigrés poured into France millions of false *assignats* or currency notes of the French Republic. In this way they tried to ruin French currency and finances.

The foreign war dominated everything and all the energy of the nation went into it. Such wars are dangerous for revolutions, for they turn attention from social problems to fighting the foreign enemy and thus the real object of the revolution is defeated. War fever takes the place of the fever of revolution. So it happened in France and, as we shall see, the last stage of France was the dictatorship of a great military commander.

There was trouble also at home. In the Vendée, in the west of France, a great peasant revolt broke out, partly because of the refusal of the peasantry there to join the new armies, and partly because of the efforts of the royalist leaders and émigrés. The Revolution was really being controlled and directed by the city people of Paris; the peasantry could not understand or appreciate the swift changes in the capital, and they lagged behind. The Vendée revolt was suppressed with great cruelty. During war, and especially civil war, the worst passions are aroused and pity becomes a homeless wanderer. In Lyons there was a counter-revolutionary rising. It was put down and a proposal was made that the great city of Lyons be destroyed as a punishment! "Lyons made war against liberty—Lyons exists no more!" Fortunately this proposal was not accepted, but Lyons was made to suffer a great deal.

Meanwhile what was happening in Paris? Who was in control there? A newly elected Commune and its sections still dominated the life of the city. In the National Convention there was a struggle for power between the various groups, chief amongst which were the Girondins or the moderate republicans and the Jacobins or the extreme republicans. The Jacobins won and at the beginning of June, 1793, most of the Girondin deputies were excluded from the Convention. The

Convention now took the final step to abolish feudal rights, and lands which had belonged to the feudal lords were restored to the local communes or municipalities, that is these lands became common property.

The Convention, dominated by the Jacobins now, appointed two committees—the Committees of Public Welfare and Public Safety—and gave them wide powers. These committees, and especially the one on Public Safety, soon became very powerful and dreaded. They drove the Convention on from step to step till the Revolution tumbled into the abyss of the Terror. Fear still cast its shadow over everybody; fear of the foreign enemies which surrounded them, of spies and traitors, and there were many of these. Fear blinds and makes desperate, and the Convention, urged on by this ever-haunting fear, passed a terrible law in September, 1793—the Law of Suspects. No one who was suspected was safe, and who could be free from being suspected? A month later twenty-two Girondin deputies of the Convention were tried by the Revolutionary Tribunal and rapidly sentenced to death.

Thus began the Terror. Daily there were journeys to the guillotine of those who were condemned; daily the carts, tumbrils they were called, carrying these victims, creaked and rumbled over the cobble-stones of the Paris streets, and the people jeered at the unhappy persons. To speak even in the Convention against the ruling clique was dangerous, for that led to suspicion and suspicion led to trial and the guillotine. The Convention was controlled by the Committees of Public Welfare and Public Safety. These Committees, with all the power of life and death in their hands, did not like to share it with others. They objected to the Commune of Paris; indeed they objected to everyone who did not agree with them. Power has an extraordinary way of corrupting people. So these Committees set about to crush the Commune which, with its sections, had been the backbone of the Revolution. They crushed the sections first, and having lopped off its supports, they crush-

ed the Commune. Thus does revolution often eat itself up. The sections in each part of Paris were the links which joined the populace with the people on top; they were the veins through which ran the red blood of the Revolution, which gave it strength and life. The crushing of the sections and the Commune early in 1794 meant the cutting off of this life blood. Henceforth the Convention and the Committees were organs of government on top, not in living touch with the people, trying like all those in authority to impose their will on others by means of the Terror. This was the beginning of the end of the real revolutionary period. For another six months the Terror was to continue and the Revolution drag on. But the end was in sight.

Who were the leaders of Paris and France during these days of storm and stress? Many names stand out. Camille Desmoulins, the man who led the attack on the Bastille in 1789, and played a notable part on many another occasion. Pleading for a policy of clemency during the Terror, he himself fell a victim to the guillotine, to be followed only a few days later by his young wife, Lucille, who preferred death to living without him. Fabre d'Eglantine, the poet. Fouquier-Tinville, the dreaded public prosecutor. Marat, perhaps the greatest and ablest of the men of the Revolution, stabbed to death by a young girl, Charlotte Corday. Danton, whom I have twice quoted already, brave and leonine, a great and popular orator, but none the less to end on the guillotine. And Robespierre, the best known of all, the leader of the Jacobins and practically the dictator of the Convention during the days of the Terror. He has become almost the embodiment of the Terror and many people think of him with a shudder. Yet of this man's honesty and patriotism there is no question; he was known as the "incorruptible." But simple as he was in his life he was inordinately self-centred, and he seemed to think that everyone who differed from him was a traitor to the Republic and the Revolution. Many of the great men of the Revolution, who had been his col-

leagues, were sent to the guillotine at his instance; till at last the Convention which had been following him so meekly, turned upon him. They called him a tyrant and a despot and put an end to him and his despotism.

All these leaders of the Revolution were young men; revolutions are seldom made by the old. Important as many of these leaders were, none of them, not even Robespierre, plays a dominating part in the great drama. Before the fact of the Revolution itself they seem to shrink; for the Revolution was not brought about or even controlled by them. It was one of those elemental human earthquakes which occur from time to time in history, and which social conditions and long continued misery and despotism prepare, slowly but irrevocably.

Do not imagine that the Convention did nothing except quarrel and guillotine. The energy released by a real revolution is always very great. Much of this was absorbed by the foreign wars, but still much remained, and a great deal of constructive work was done. In particular, the whole system of national education was overhauled. The Metric System, which every child in school learns now, was introduced then, and it simplified all weights and measures of length and volume. This system has spread to most parts of the civilized world now but conservative England still sticks to an ancient out-of-date system of yards and furlongs and pounds and hundredweights and the like. We in India have to put up with these complicated lengths and weights as well as seers and maunds, etc.

As a logical corollary to the metric system, there was a new republican calendar. It began from the day the Republic was proclaimed September 22, 1792. The week of seven days was changed to a week of ten days, the tenth day being a holiday. There were twelve months still but their names were changed. Fabre d'Eglantine, the poet, gave delightful new names to the months in accordance with the season. The three spring months were Germinal, Floréal, Prairial; the summer

months were Messidor, Thermidor, Fructidor; autumn came in Vendémiaire, Brumaire, Frimaire; and winter in Nivôse, Pluviôse, Ventôse. This calendar did not long survive the Republic.

At one time there was a strong movement against Christianity and the worship of Reason was proposed. Temples of Truth were put up. The movement spread rapidly to the provinces. In November, 1793, there was a great Fête of Liberty and Reason in Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris and a beautiful woman personified Reason. But Robespierre was conservative in such matters. He did not approve of this movement. Neither did Danton. The Jacobin Committee of Public Welfare was against it and the leaders of the movement were therefore guillotined. There was no half-way house between power and the guillotine. As a counterblast to the Fête of Liberty and Reason, Robespierre arranged another celebration—the Fête of the Supreme Being. By a vote of the Convention it was decided that France believed in a Supreme Being! The Roman Catholic religion crept back again into favour.

After the crushing of the Paris sections and Commune, matters were rapidly coming to a head. The Jacobins were supreme; they controlled the government, but they were falling out among themselves. The guillotining of Hébert and his supporters, who had taken the lead in the Fête of Liberty and Reason, was the first big break in the Jacobin party. Fabre d'Eglantine followed; and when, early in 1794, Danton and Camille Desmoulins and others protested against Robespierre sending too many people to the guillotine, they themselves were struck down. The execution of Danton in April 1794, carried off in a hurry lest the people should intervene, meant to the people of Paris and the provinces that the Revolution had ended. A lion of the Revolution had fallen, and a narrow clique was now in power. Surrounded by enemies, cut off from the people, this clique spotted treason everywhere and saw no other way of saving itself than to intensify the Terror.

So the Terror grew worse and the Tumbrils rolling to the guillotine were more crowded with victims than ever. In June a new law was passed, called the Law of the 22nd Prairial, which made it a crime, punishable by death, to spread false news to divide or stir up the people, to undermine morality and corrupt the public conscience. Everyone who differed from Robespierre and his henchmen could be caught in the wide net of this law. Large groups of persons were tried together and sentenced—as many as one hundred and fifty, a mixture of convicts, royalists and others, being tried together on one occasion.

For forty-six days this new Terror lasted. At last on the 9th Thermidor (July 27, 1794) the worm turned. The Convention suddenly turned against Robespierre and his supporters, and with cries of "down with the tyrant, they arrested them and would not allow Robespierre even to speak. Thc next day the tumbril carried him to the guillotine where he had sent so many. Thus ended the French Revolution.

After the fall of Robespierre came the counter-revolution. The Moderates came to the front and these people now fell on the Jacobins and terrorised over them. After the Red Terror there was now what is called the White Terror. Fifteen months later, in October 1795, the Convention broke up and a Directory of five members became the government. This was definitely a bourgeois government and it tried to keep down the common people. For over four years the Directory ruled France and, such was the prestige and strength of the Republic even after all the internal troubles, carried on victorious war abroad. There were some insurrections against it but they were put down. One of these was suppressed by a young general of the Republican Army, Napoleon Bonaparte, who dared to fire at the Paris crowd—this is famous as the "whiff of grapeshot" —and kill many of them. When the old Revolutionary Army could itself be used to kill the common people of France then obviously there was no shadow of revolu-

tion left.

So the Revolution ended, and many of the bright dreams of the idealists and the hopes of the poor ended with it. And yet it had gained much that it set out to gain. No counter-revolution could bring back serfdom again, and not even the Bourbon kings—the French dynasty was Bourbon—when they came back, could take back the land which had been distributed among the peasantry. The common man in the field or in the town was far better off than he had ever been before. Indeed even during the Terror he was better off than before the Revolution. The Terror was not against him but against the upper classes; though towards the end some of the poorer people also suffered under it.

The Revolution fell, but the republican idea spread throughout Europe, and with it went the principles which had been proclaimed in the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

103

THE WAYS OF GOVERNMENTS

October 27, 1932

I have not written for two weeks. I am afraid I grow slack. The thought that I am approaching the end of my story keeps me back a little. Already we are at the end of the eighteenth century; the hundred years of the nineteenth century await our inspection, and then we shall have just two and thirty years of the twentieth to bring us right up to to-day. But these one hundred and thirty-two years that remain will take a lot of telling. Being quite near us, they loom large and fill our minds, and seem to us more important than earlier events. Much that we see around us to-day has its roots in these years and indeed I shall have no easy task in leading you through the dense forest of events and happenings of the last century and more. Perhaps this is the reason why I shirk it! But I wonder also what I shall do when, at last, I bring this story of man to the year 1932, and the past merges into the present and stops before the shadow of the future. What shall I write to you then, my dear? What pretext shall I find to sit pen in hand and think of you, or imagine you sitting by me asking me many a question which I try to answer?

Three letters I have written about the French Revolution; three long letters about five brief years in the history of France. During our journey through the ages we have taken centuries at a stride, and we have seen continents at a glance. But here in France, between the years 1789 and 1794, we have made a fairly lengthy stay; and yet you will be surprised to learn that I have tried very hard to be brief, for my mind was full

of the subject and my pen wanted to run on. The French Revolution is important historically. It marks the end of an epoch and the beginning of another. But it fascinates even more by its dramatic character, and it teaches many a lesson to all of us. The world is to-day again in a ferment and we are on the eve of great changes. In our own country we live in a period of revolution, however peaceful it may be. So we may learn much from the French Revolution and from the other great revolution, which has taken place in Russia in our own day and almost before our eyes. Real revolutions of the people, like these two, cast a fierce light on the grim realities of life; like a flash of lightning they reveal the whole landscape and especially the dark places. For a while at least the goal seems clearly visible and strangely near. Faith and energy fill one. Doubt and hesitation vanish. There is no question of compromise with the second best. Straight like an arrow, the men who make the revolution go toward the goal, seeing neither to the right nor to the left; and the straighter and keener their vision the further goes the revolution. But this occurs only during the high period of the revolution when its leaders are on the mountain peaks and the masses are marching up the mountain side. But, alas, there comes a time when they have to come down from the mountains into the dark valleys below, and faith grows dim and energy grows less.

In 1778 old Voltaire, who had been an exile almost all his life, came back to Paris to die. He was eighty-four years old then. Addressing the youth of Paris he said: "The young are fortunate; they will see great things." Indeed they saw and took part in great things for the Revolution broke out eleven years later. It had been kept waiting long enough *"L'Etat c'est moi"* had said Louis XIV, the Grand Monarque, in the seventeenth century; *"après moi le déluge"* said his successor, Louis XV, in the eighteenth, and after this invitation the deluge came and swept away Louis XVI and his company. Instead of the nobles with their powder-

ed wigs and silken breeches, the "sansculottes"—the men without breeches—came to the front; and everybody in France was a "citoyen" or a "citoyenne." "*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*"* was the motto of the new Republic shouted out to the world.

The Terror looms large in the days of the Revolution. In less than sixteen months, from the appointment of the special Revolutionary Tribunal to the fall of Robespierre, nearly four thousand persons were guillotined. That is a large number, and when one thinks that many an innocent person must have been sent to the guillotine, one is shocked and grieved. And yet it is well to remember certain facts so that we may see the French Terror in its true perspective. The Republic was surrounded by enemies and traitors and spies and many of those condemned to the guillotine were avowed opponents working for the destruction of the Republic. Toward the end of the Terror the innocent suffered with the guilty. When fear comes in our vision is clouded and it becomes difficult to distinguish between the guilty and the innocent. The French Republic had to face at a critical moment the opposition and treachery of some even of their own great generals, like Lafayette. It is no wonder that the nerve of the leaders failed them and they started hitting right and left indiscriminately.

It is also well to remember, as H. G. Wells points out in his history, what was happening in those days in England and America and other countries. The criminal law, especially in defence of property, was savage and people were hanged for trivial offences. In some places torture was still officially used. Wells says that far more people were hanged in this way in England and America than were sent to the guillotine under the Terror in France, during the same period.

Think again of the slave raids of those days with

*Liberty, equality, fraternity.

their horrible cruelty and inhumanity. Think also of war, modern war especially, which wipes off hundreds of thousands of young men in their prime. Come nearer, to our own country, and consider recent events. Thirteen years ago on an April evening in Amritsar, the day of the spring festival, hundreds were done to death and thousands grievously wounded in the Jallianwala Bagh. And all the conspiracy cases and special tribunals and ordinances—what are they but attempts to terrorise and coerce a people? The intensity of repression and terrorism is a measure of the fear of a government. Every government, reactionary or revolutionary, alien or swadeshi, when it fears for its own existence, indulges in terrorism. The reactionary government does so on behalf of some privileged people and against the masses; the revolutionary government acts on behalf of the masses and against the privileged few. The revolutionary government is franker and more straight-forward; it is often cruel and harsh but there is little of subterfuge or deceit in it. The reactionary government lives in an atmosphere of deception for it knows that it could not last if it was found out. It talks about liberty and means thereby liberty for itself to do what it pleases. It talks of justice and means by it the perpetuation of the existing order under which it flourishes, though others perish. Above all, it talks of law and order and, under cover of this phrase, shoots and kills and imprisons and gags and does every illegal and disorderly thing. In the name of "law and order" hundreds of our brethren have been tried by special tribunals and condemned to death. In this name, on an April day two and a half years ago in Peshawar, machine guns shot down large numbers of our brave Pathan fellow-countrymen, unarmed as they were. And for this "law and order" the British Air Force drop bombs on our frontier villages and in Iraq and kills or maims for life men and women and little children indiscriminately. Lest people should escape on the approach of an aeroplane, a fiendish ingenuity has devised what are called

"time-delayed bombs", which fall down apparently harmlessly and do not burst for a while. The men and women of the village, thinking that the danger is past, return to their homes and, soon after, the bombs burst and kill and destroy.

Think also of the day to day terror of starvation which overshadows millions! We get used to the misery around us. We imagine that the workers and the peasants are a coarser lot and not very sensitive to suffering. Vain arguments to still the pricking of our own consciences! I remember visiting a coal mine in Jharia in Behar, and I shall never forget the shock I had when I saw men and women working away far underneath the surface of the earth in long, black, dark corridors of coal. People talk of an eight-hour work day for the mine-workers, and some even oppose this and think that more work should be taken out of them. And when I hear or read these arguments my mind goes back to the visit of mine to the black dungeons below where even eight minutes became a trial for me.

The French Terror was a terrible thing. And yet it was a flea bite compared to the chronic evils of poverty and unemployment. The costs of social revolution, however great they might be, are less than these evils and the cost of war which comes to us from time to time under our present political and social system. The Terror of the French Revolution looms large because many titled and aristocratic persons were its victims, and we are so used to honouring the privileged classes that our sympathies go out to them when they are in trouble. It is well to sympathise with them as with others. But it is also well to remember that they are just a few. We may wish them well. But those who really matter are the masses, and we cannot sacrifice the many to a few. "'Tis the people that compose the human race," writes Rousseau, "what is not people is so small a concern that it is not worth the trouble of counting."

I intended telling you of Napoleon in this letter.

But my mind has wandered and my pen run on to other subjects and Napoleon still awaits inspection. He must wait our pleasure till the next letter.

NAPOLEON

November 4, 1932

Out of the French Revolution emerged Napoleon. France, Republican France, that had challenged and dared the kings of Europe, succumbed to this little Corsican. A strange, wild beauty had France then. A French poet, Barbier, has compared her to a wild animal, a proud and free mare, with head high and shining skin; a beautiful vagabond, fiercely intolerant of saddle and harness and rein, stamping on the ground, and frightening the world with the noise of her neighing. This proud mare consented to be ridden by the young man from Corsica, and he did many wonderful deeds with her. But he tamed her also and made the wild free thing lose all her wildness and freedom. And he exploited her and exhausted her till she threw him down and fell down herself.

O Corse à cheveux plats! que la France était belle
Au grand soleil de messidor!
C'était une cavale indomptable et rebelle,
Sans frein d'acier, ni rênes d'or;
Une jument sauvage à la coupe rustique,
Fumante encore du sang des rois,
Mais fière, et d'un pied fort heurtant le sol antique,
Libre pour la première fois!
Jamais aucune main n'avait passé sur elle
Pour la flétrir et l'outrager;
Jamais ses large flancs n'avaient porté la selle
Et le harnais de l'étranger;
Tout son poil reluisait, et, belle vagabonde,
L'oeil haut, la croupe en movement,
Sur ses jarrets dressée, elle effrayait le monde
Du bruit de son hennissement.

You know something of Napoleon already. You have visited the stately *Invalides* in Paris where his body lies buried, surrounded by the tattered flags he won in war; you have seen the museum where many of his relics are kept; and you have also seen his statue on the top of the great Vendome column in Paris. I have an idea that you were rather partial to him and thought of him as a great hero. I shall confess to you that all through my boyhood I had a soft corner in my heart for him. He was one of my heroes, though I knew little enough of him then. I know much more now and I am afraid he has shrunk in my mind and does not loom nearly so big as he used to long ago. But I cannot wholly rub off the picture of the days of my boyhood or get rid of my partiality for him, even though I remind myself of his many failings. It is strange how the impressions of one's childhood and boyhood persist through life.

What manner of man was Napoleon then? Was he one of the great ones of the earth, the Man of Destiny, as he was called, a mighty hero and one who helped in freeing humanity from its many burdens? Or was he, as H. G. Wells and some others say, a mere adventurer and a wrecker, who did great injury to Europe and civilization? Probably both these views are exaggerated; probably both contain some measure of the truth. All of us are curious mixtures of the good and the bad, the great and the little. He was such a mixture, but, unlike most of us, extraordinary qualities went to make up this mixture. Courage he had and self-confidence and imagination and amazing energy and vast ambition. He was a very great general, a master of the art of war, comparable to the great captains of old—Alexander and Chengiz. But he was petty also and selfish and self-centred and the dominating impulse of his life was not the pursuit of an ideal but the quest of personal power. "My mistress!" he once said, "Power is my mistress! The conquest of that mistress has cost me so much that I will allow no one to rob me of her, or to share her with me!" Child of the Revolution he was and yet he

dreamt of vast empire and the conquests of Alexander filled his mind. Even Europe seemed small. The East lured him, and especially Egypt and India. "Only in the East," he said early in his career when he was twenty-seven, "have there been great empires and mighty changes; in the East where six hundred million people dwell. Europe is a mole-hill!"

Napoleon Bonaparte was born in 1769 in the island of Corsica, which was under France. He had mixed French-Corsican and Italian blood. He was trained in a military school in France and, during the Revolution, was a member of the Jacobin Club. But probably he joined the Jacobins merely to advance his own interests and not because he believed in their ideals. In 1793 he won his first victory at Toulon. The rich people of this place, afraid of losing their property under the revolutionary régime, had actually invited the English and handed over the remains of the French navy to them. This disaster, coupled with others at the time, had been a great blow to the young Republic and every available man and even women were called upon to enlist. Napoleon crushed the rebels and defeated the English force at Toulon by a masterly attack. His star began to shine brightly now and at the age of twenty-four he was a general. Within a few months, however, he got into trouble when Robespierre was guillotined and he was suspected of belonging to his party. But the only party he really belonged to had a membership of one only, namely, Napoleon! Then came the Directory and Napoleon proved that, far from being a Jacobin, he was a leader of counter-revolution and could shoot down the common people without turning a hair. This was the famous "whiff of grapeshot" in 1795, of which I have told you in a previous letter. On that day Napoleon wounded the Republic. Within ten years he had put an end to the Republic and become Emperor of the French.

In 1796 he became the commander of the Army of Italy and he astonished Europe by a brilliant campaign

in north Italy. The French army had still something of the fire of revolution. But they were in rags and had neither proper clothes nor shoes nor food nor money. He led this tattered and foot-sore band across the Alps, promising them food and all good things when they reached the rich Italian plain. To the people of Italy, on the other hand, he promised freedom; he was coming to liberate them from oppressors. A strange mixture or revolutionary jargon with the prospect of loot and plunder! So he played cleverly on the feelings of both the French and the Italians, and, being partly Italian himself, he produced a great impression. As victories came to him his prestige grew and his fame spread. In his own army he shared in many ways the lot of the common soldier, and he shared also his danger, for an attack usually found him wherever danger threatened most. He was ever on the look out for real merit and rewarded it immediately even on the battlefield. To his soldiers he was like a father—a very young father!—known affectionately as the "Petit Corporal", and often addressed by them as "tu". Is it any wonder that this young general in his twenties became the darling of the French soldiers?

Having triumphed all over north Italy and defeated Austria there, and put an end to the old republic of Venice, and made a very undesirable imperialistic peace, he returned to Paris as the great conquering hero. He was beginning to dominate France already. But he felt perhaps that the time was not ripe for him to seize power, and so he arranged to go with an army to Egypt. From his youth onwards he had felt this call of the east and now he could gratify it, and dreams of vast empire must have floated in his mind. He just managed to escape the English fleet in the Mediterranean and reached Alexandria.

Egypt was then part of the Ottoman Turkish Empire, but this empire had declined, and in effect the Mamelukes ruled Egypt, nominally under the Sultan of Turkey. Revolutions and inventions might shake

Europe but the Mamelukes still lived after the fashion of the Middle Ages. It is said that when Napoleon approached Cairo, a Mameluke knight, in brilliant attire of silk and damascened armour, rode up to the French army and challenged the leader to single combat! The poor man was met most unchivalrously by a volley. Soon after, Napoleon won the Battle of the Pyramids. He was fond of dramatic poses. Riding in front of his troops before the Pyramids he addressed them: "Soldiers, forty centuries are looking down upon you!"

Napoleon was master of war on land and he continued to win. But on sea he was helpless. He did not understand it and he does not seem to have had competent admirals. England just then had a genius in command of her navy in the Mediterranean. This was Horatio Nelson. Nelson came, rather audaciously, right into harbour one day and destroyed the French fleet at what is called the Battle of the Nile. Napoleon was thus cut off from France in a foreign country. He managed to escape secretly and reached France but in doing so he sacrified his Army of the East.

In spite of victories and some military glory the great eastern expedition had been a failure. It is interesting to note, however, that Napoleon took with him to Egypt a whole crowd of savants and learned men and professors with books and all manner of apparatus. There were daily discussions of this "Institute", in which Napoleon joined as an equal, and the savants did a great deal of good work of scientific exploration. The old riddle of the hieroglyphics was solved by the discovery of a granite slab containing an inscription in three scripts—Greek and two variants of Egyptian picture writing. With the help of the Greek the other two scripts were deciphered. It is also interesting to find that a proposal to cut a canal at Suez interested Napoleon greatly.

When in Egypt, Napoleon opened negotiations with the Shah of Persia and Tippu Sultan in South India. But nothing came of them because of his powerlessness

at sea. It was sea-power that ultimately broke Napoleon; and it was sea-power that made England great in the nineteenth century.

France was in a bad way when Napoleon returned from Egypt. The Directory was discredited and unpopular, and so everybody turned to him. He was willing enough to assume power. A month after his return, in November 1799, with the help of his brother Lucien, he forcibly dispersed the Assembly and thus put an end to the constitution as it then existed, under which the Directory had governed. This *coup d'état*, as such forcible state actions are called, made Napoleon the master of the situation. He could only do it because he was popular and the people had faith in him. The Revolution had long been liquidated; democracy even was now disappearing and a popular general held the field. A new constitution was drafted under which there were to be three consuls (this name was taken from ancient Rome), but the chief of these with full power was Napoleon, who was called First Consul and was appointed for ten years. During the discussions on the constitution some one suggested that there should be a president with no real power, whose chief business would be to sign documents and formally represent the Republic, something like the constitutional kings, or the French president, of to-day. But Napoleon wanted power, not merely the livery of royalty. He would have none of this stately but powerless president. "Away with this fat hog," he cried!

This constitution, with Napoleon as First Consul for ten years, was put to the vote of the people, and it was almost unanimously adopted by over three million votes. Thus the people of France themselves presented all power to Napoleon, in the vain hope that he would bring them freedom and happiness.

But we cannot follow Napoleon's life-story in detail. It is full of intense activity and a hunger for more and more power. On the very first night after the *coup d'état*, before the new constitution was framed or

passed, he appointed two committees to draft a legal code. This was the first act of his dictatorship. After long discussions, in which Napoleon joined, this code was finally adopted in 1804. It was called the *Code Napoléon.* Judged by the ideas of the Revolution or by modern standards, this code was not advanced. But it was an advance on existing conditions and for a hundred years it was, in some respects, almost a model for Europe. In many other ways he introduced simplicity and efficiency in the administration. He interfered in everything and had a wonderful memory for details. With his amazing energy and vitality he exhausted all his co-workers and secretaries. One of these co-workers writes about him during this period: "Ruling, administering, negotiating—with that orderly intelligence of his, he gets through 18 hours work a day. In three years he has ruled more than the kings ruled in a century." This no doubt is exaggerated, but it is clear that Napoleon had, like Akbar, an extraordinary memory and perfectly ordered mind. He said himself: "When I wish to put away any matter out of my mind, I close its drawer and open the drawer belonging to another. The contents of the drawers never get mixed up, and they never worry me or weary me. Do I want sleep? I close all the drawers and then I am asleep." Indeed he was known to lie down on the ground in the middle of a battle and sleep for half an hour or so and then get up for another long spell of intensive work.

He had been made First Consul for ten years. The next step in the ladder of power came after three years, in 1802, when he had himself made Consul for life and his powers were increased. The Republic was at an end and he was a monarch in all but name, and inevitably, in 1804, he declared himself emperor after taking a vote of the poeple. He was all powerful in France and yet there was a great difference between him and the autocratic kings of old. He could not base his authority on tradition and divine right. He had to base it on his efficiency and on his popularity with the people, espe-

cially the peasants who were all along his most faithful supporters because they felt that he had saved their lands for them. "What do I care," said Napoleon once, "for the opinion of drawing rooms and the babblers! I recognise only one opinion, that of the peasants." But the peasants also grew weary at last of supplying their sons for the warfare that was almost continuously going on. When this support was withdrawn, the mighty edifice that Napoleon had created, began to totter.

For ten years he was Emperor, and during these years he rushed about all over the Continent of Europe and carried on striking military campaigns and won memorable battles. All Europe trembled at his name and was dominated by him as it has never been dominated by anyone else before or since. Marengo (this was in 1800, when he crossed with his army the Great St. Bernard pass in Switzerland, all covered with the winter snow), Ulm, Austerlitz, Jena, Eylau, Friedland, Wagram, are the names of some of his famous victories on land. Austria, Prussia and Russia all collapsed before him. Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, a great part of Germany called the Confederation of the Rhine, Poland called now the Duchy of Warsaw, were all subject States. The old Holy Roman Empire, which had long existed in name only, was finally ended.

Of the major European Powers England alone escaped disaster. The sea, which was ever a mystery to Napoleon, saved England. And because of the security given by the sea, England became the greatest and most relentless of his enemies. I have told you how, right at the beginning of his career, Nelson destroyed Napoleon's fleet in the Battle of the Nile. On October 21, 1805, Nelson won a greater victory still against the combined French and Spanish fleets off Cape Trafalgar on the south coast of Spain. It was just before this sea battle that Nelson gave his famous signal to his fleet: "England expects that every man will do his duty." Nelson died in the hour of triumph, but his victory, proudly cherished by the English people and commemo-

rated in the Nelson column and Trafalgar Square in London, destroyed Napoleon's dream of invading England.

Napoleon retaliated by an order closing all the harbours on the Continent of Europe to England. There were to be no communications with her of any kind and England, "the nation of shop-keepers", was to be subdued in this way. England, on her part, blockaded these ports and prevented trade between Napoleon's Empire and America and other continents. England also fought Napoleon by ceaseless intrigue on the Continent and lavish distribution of gold to his enemies and to neutrals. She was helped in this by some of the great money houses of Europe, notably the Rothschilds.

Yet another method adopted by England against Napoleon was propaganda. This was a novel kind of campaign then but it has since become common enough. A press campaign against France, and especially Napoleon, was started. All manner of articles, pamphlets, news-sheets, cartoons making fun of the new Emperor, and spurious memoirs, full of falsehoods, were issued from London and smuggled into France. Nowadays a press campaign of falsehood has become a regular part of modern war. During the Great War of 1914-18 the most extraordinary lies were told unblushingly by all governments of the countries involved, and in this art of manufacturing and circulating falsehood, the English government seems to have been easily first. It had a long century-old training since the days of Napoleon. We in India know well enough how truth about our country is suppressed and the most amazing falsehoods circulated by the British authorities here and in England.

This letter has become a very long one. And yet I have told you barely half the story of Napoleon.

105

MORE ABOUT NAPOLEON

November 6, 1932

We must carry on the story of Napoleon from where we left off in our last letter.

Wherever Napoleon went, he carried something of the French Revolution with him, and the peoples of the countries he conquered were not wholly averse to his coming. They were weary of their own effete and half-feudal rulers who sat heavily upon them. This helped Napoleon greatly and feudalism fell before him as he marched. In Germany especially was feudalism swept away. In Spain he put an end to the Inquisition. But the very spirit of nationalism that he unconsciously evoked turned against him and ultimately defeated him. He could overpower the old kings and emperors but not a whole people roused against him. The Spanish people thus rose against him and for years sapped his energy and resources. The German people also organised themselves under a great patriot, Baron Von Stein, who became the implacable enemy of Napoleon. There was a German war of liberation. Thus Nationalism, which Napoleon himself had aroused, allied to sea-power, brought about his fall. But in any event it would have been difficult for the whole of Europe to tolerate a dictator. Or, perhaps, Napoleon himself was correct when he said afterwards: "No one but myself can be blamed for my fall. I have been my own greatest enemy, the cause of my disastrous fate."

This man of genius had the most extraordinary failings. He always had a touch of the parvenu, the upstart, about him, and he nourished a strange desire to be treated as an equal by the old and effete kings and

emperors. He advanced his own brothers and sisters in the most absurd way, although they were thoroughly incompetent. The only decent brother was Lucien, who had helped Napoleon at a critical moment during the *coup d'état* of 1799, but who subsequently fell out with him and retired to Italy. The other brothers, vain and foolish, were made kings and rulers by Napoleon. He had a curious and vulgar passion for pushing on his family. Almost everyone of them played him false and deserted him when he was in trouble. Napoleon was also very keen on founding a dynasty. Early in his career, even before he had gone on the Italian campaign and become famous, he had married Josephine de Beauharnais, a beautiful but rather flighty lady. He was terribly disappointed at having no children by her, for he had set his heart on a dynasty. So he decided to divorce Josephine and marry another woman, although he liked her. He wanted to marry a Russian Grand Duchess, but the Tsar would not agree to this. Napoleon might be almost the master of Europe, but the Tsar considered it somewhat presumptuous of him to aspire to marry into the Russian imperial family! Napoleon then more or less forced the Hapsburg Emperor of Austria to give his daughter Marie Louise in marriage. He had a son by her, but she was dull and unintelligent and did not like him at all and made him a bad wife. When he was in trouble, she deserted him and forgot all about him.

It is very strange how this man, who towered above his generation in many ways, fell a victim to the empty glamour which the old idea of kingship exercised. And yet, often enough, he spoke in terms of revolution and made fun of these effete kings. He had deliberately turned his back to the Revolution and the new order; the old order neither suited him nor was it prepared to have him. So between the two, he fell.

Gradually this career of military glory goes to its inevitable tragic end. Some of his own ministers are treacherous and intrigue against him; Talleyrand in-

trigues with the Tsar of Russia, Fouché intrigues with England. Napoleon catches them in their treachery and yet, strange to say, merely upbraids them and allows them to continue as his ministers. One of his generals, Bernadotte, turns against him and becomes a bitter enemy. His family, except for his mother and his brother Lucien, continue to misbehave and often work against him. Even in France discontent increases and his dictatorship becomes hard and ruthless, many people being imprisoned without trial. His star is definitely on the decline, and many a raft, foreseeing the end, deserts the ship. Physically and mentally he is also declining, although still young in years. He gets violent colic pains right in the middle of a battle. Power also corrupts him. His old skill is still there, but he moves more heavily now, often he hesitates and is in doubt, and his armies are more cumbrous.

In 1812, with a mighty army—the Grande Armée it was called—he moves to the invasion of Russia. He defeats the Russians and then advances without much opposition. The Russian armies retreat and retreat and refuse to fight. The Grande Armée seeks them in vain and at last reaches Moscow. The Tsar is inclined to give in, but two men, a Frenchman, Bernadotte, Napoleon's old colleague and general, and the German Nationalist leader, Baron Von Stein, whom Napoleon had declared an outlaw, prevail upon him not to do so. The Russians set fire to their own beloved city of Moscow to smoke the enemy out. And when news of the burning of Moscow reaches St. Petersburgh, Stein, sitting at table, raises his glass to it and cries: "Three or four times, ere this, I have lost my baggage. We must get used to throwing away such things. Since we must die, let us be valiant!"

It is the beginning of winter. Napoleon decides to leave burning Moscow and to return to France. And so the Grand Armée trudges back wearily through the snow with the Russian Cossacks ever by their sides and at their heels, attacking them, harassing them continu-

ously, cutting down stragglers. The bitter cold and the Cossacks between them take toll of thousands of lives, and the Grand Armée becomes a ghostly procession—all on foot and in rags, foot-sore and frost-bitten, wearily dragging themselves along. Napoleon also marches on foot with his grenadiers. It is a terrible and heart-breaking march, and the mighty army becomes smaller and smaller and almost vanishes away. Just a handful of people return.

This Russian campaign was a terrible blow. It exhausted France of her man power. Even more so it aged Napoleon and made him care-worn and weary of strife. But he was not to be allowed to rest in peace. His enemies surrounded him and, although he was still the brilliant commander winning victories, the net drew closer and closer. Talleyrand's intrigues increased and some even of Napoleon's trusted marshals turned against him. Weary and disgusted, Napoleon abdicated from the throne in April 1814.

A great congress of the European powers was held in Vienna to make a new map of Europe, now that Napoleon was out of the way. Napoleon was sent to the little island of Elba in the Mediterranean. Another Bourbon, another Louis, brother of the one who was guillotined, was brought out from wherever he had been living in seclusion and was placed on the throne of France as Louis XVIII. The Bourbons were thus back again and with them came back much of the old tyranny. So this was the end of all the brave doings of five and twenty years since the Bastille fell! In Vienna the kings and their ministers argued and quarrelled among themselves and during the intervals had a good time. They felt enormously relieved. A great terror had been removed and they could breathe again. Talleyrand, the traitor who had betrayed Napoleon, was popular with this crowd of kings and ministers, and played an important part in the Congress. Another famous diplomatist at the Congress was Metternich, the foreign minister of Austria.

In less than a year Napoleon had had enough of Elba and France had had enough of the Bourbons. He managed to escape in a little boat and landed at Cannes on the Riviera on February 26, 1815, almost alone. He was received enthusiastically by the peasants. The armies that were sent to him, when they saw their old commander—the "Petit Corporal"—shouted *Vive l'Empereur* and joined him. And so, triumphantly, he reached Paris and the Bourbon King fled away. But in all the other capitals of Europe there was terror and consternation. And in Vienna, where the Congress was still dragging on, the dancing and the feasting came to a sudden end, and a common fear made the kings and ministers forget all their squabbling and concentrate on the one task of crushing Napoleon anew. So all Europe marched against him, but France was weary of warfare. And Napoleon, although only forty-six, was a tried old man, forsaken even by his wife, Marie Louise. He won some battles, but finally he was defeated at Waterloo, near the city of Brussels, by the English and Prussian armies, under Wellington and Blücher, just a hundred days since he landed. This period of his return is therefore called "The Hundred Days." Waterloo was a hardly contested battle and victory hung in the balance. Napoleon had very bad luck. It was quite possible for him to have won it, but even so he would have had to go down some time later before a combined Europe. Defeated as he was now, many of his supporters tried to save themselves by turning against him. A struggle was hopeless now, and he greatly disliked the idea of civil war. So he abdicated for a second time, and went to an English ship in a French port and handed himself over to the captain, saying that he wanted to live quietly in England.

But he was mistaken if he expected liberal and courteous treatment from England or Europe. They were too frightened of him, and his escape from Elba had convinced them that he must be kept far away and

securely guarded. So, in spite of his protests, he was declared a prisoner and sent, with a few companions, to the far away island of St. Helena in the South Atlantic Ocean. He was considered "the prisoner of Europe," and several Powers sent commissioners to keep watch on him in St. Helena, but in reality the English had the full responsibility for guarding him. Even on that far away island, cut off from the world, they brought quite an army to keep watch on him. This lonely rock of St. Helena was described at the time by Count Balmain, the Russian Commissioner there, as "that spot in the world which is the saddest, the most isolated, the most unapproachable, the easiest to defend, the hardest to attack, the most unsociable.........." The English Governor of the island was an extraordinarily uncouth and barbarous person and he treated Napoleon very shabbily. He was kept in the most unhealthy part of the island in a stable of a house and all manner of irritating restrictions were placed on him and his companions. Sometimes he did not even have enough wholesome food to eat. He was not allowed to communicate with friends in Europe, not even with his little son, whom, in the days of his power, he had given the title of King of Rome. Indeed even news of his son was not allowed to reach him. A German botanist, who came to St. Helena, had seen Napoleon's wife and son in Vienna, but he was not permitted to see Napoleon or even to send him a message. "The barbarians," said Napoleon, "have carefully prevented him from coming to give me news of them."

It is surprising how meanly Napoleon was treated. But the Governor of St. Helena was but the tool of his government, and it seems to have been the deliberate policy of the English government to ill-treat and humiliate their prisoner. The other Powers of Europe were consenting parties to this. Napoleon's mother, in spite of her old age, wanted to join him in St. Helena, but the great Powers said no! This shabby treatment given to him is a measure of the terror which he inspired still

in Europe, although his wings had been clipped and he lay powerless in a far away island.

For five and a half years he endured this living death in St. Helena. It is not difficult to imagine how this man of vast energy and imagination must have suffered, cooped up in that little rock of an island and subjected daily to petty humiliations. For over long periods he even refused to come out of his house because of these humiliations. His chief occupation was reading and dictating his memoirs, and his chief joy when a parcel of new books came for him from France. How well those of us who have spent weary months and years in prison can understand something of what Napoleon must have suffered! And how graceless and unchivalrous and callous the British government was and is still in its treatment of its opponents and prisoners.

Napoleon was humiliated and harassed in many ways. And yet listen to what the Russian Balbain says about him, nearly a year after his arrival in St. Helena. "What has struck me from the moment of my arrival (though it is rather natural) is the enormous ascendancy which this man, surrounded by guards, by rocks, by precipices, still keeps over men's minds. Everything at St. Helena reflects his superiority. The French tremble at his look, and deem themselves only too happy to serve him."

Napoleon died in May, 1821, and even after death he was pursued by the hatred of the Governor and a wretched grave was provided for him. Slowly, as the news of the ill-treatment and persecution of Napoleon reached Europe (news travelled slowly in those days), there was an outcry against it in many countries, including England. Castlereagh, the English Foreign Minister, who was chiefly responsible for this ill-treatment, became very unpopular because of this and also because of his harsh domestic policy. He felt this so much that he committed suicide.

It is difficult to judge great and extraordinary men; and that Napoleon was great in his own way and extra-

ordinary there can be no doubt. He was elemental, almost like a force of nature. Full of ideas and imagination, he was yet blind to the value of ideals and unselfish motives. He tried to win and impress people by offering them glory and wealth. When therefore his stock of glory and power lessened there were few ideal motives to keep by him those very people whom he had advanced, and many basely deserted him. Religion was to him just a method of keeping the poor and the miserable satisfied with their lot. Of Christianity he once said: "How could I accept a religion which would damn Socrates and Plato?" When in Egypt he showed some favour to Islam, no doubt because he thought this might win him popularity with the people there. He was thoroughly irreligious, and yet he encouraged religion for he looked upon it as a prop to the existing social order. "Religion", he said, "associates with heaven an idea of equality, which prevents the poor from massacring the rich. Religion has the same sort of value as vaccination. It gratifies our taste for the miraculous, and protects us from quacks. . . . Society cannot exist without inequality of property; but this latter cannot exist without religion. One who is dying of hunger when the man next him is feasting on dainties can only be sustained by a belief in a higher power, and by the conviction that in another world there will be a different distribution of goods." In the pride of his strength, he is reported to have said: "Should the heavens fall down on us we shall hold them off with the points of our lances."

He had the magnetism of the great, and he won devoted friendship from many. His glance, like Akbar's, was magnetic. "I have seldom drawn my sword," he said once, "I won my battles with my eyes, not with my weapons." A strange statement for a man who plunged Europe into war, and yet there is some truth in it. Although he was the greatest general and soldier of the day, he always preferred to attain his ends by peaceful means. He said that force was no remedy, and that the

spirit of man was greater than the sword. "Do you know", he said, "what amazes me more than all else? The impotence of force to organise anything. There are only two powers in the world: the spirit and the sword. In the long run the sword will always be conquered by the spirit." But there was no long run for him. He was in a hurry, and right at the beginning of his career he had chosen the way of the sword; and by the sword he triumphed, and by the sword he fell. Again, he said: "War is an anachronism; some day victories will be won without cannon and without bayonets." Circumstances were too much for him—his vaulting ambition, the ease with which he triumphed in war, and the hatred of the rulers of Europe for this upstart and their fear of him, which allowed him no peace to settle down. He was reckless in sacrificing human lives in battle and yet the sight of suffering greatly moved him.

In his personal life he was simple and never indulged in any excesses, except excess of work. According to him "however little a man may eat he always eats too much. One can get ill from over-eating, but never from under-eating." It was this simple life which gave him splendid health and vast energy. He could sleep when he liked and as little as he liked. To ride a hundred miles in the course of the morning and afternoon was not an extraordinary thing for him.

As his ambition carried him across the European Continent, he began to think of Europe as one State, one unit, with one law, one government. "I shall fuse all the nations into one." Later, chastened by his exile in St. Helena, this idea came back to him, and in a more impersonal form: "Sooner or later, this union (of European nations) will be brought about by the force of events. The first impetus has been given; and after the fall of my system, it seems to me that the only way in which an equilibrium can be achieved in Europe is through a league of nations." More than a hundred years later, Europe is still groping and experimenting

with a League of Nations!

He wrote a last testament in which he left a message for his little son, whom he had called the King of Rome, and news even of whom had been so cruelly kept away from him. He hoped that his son would reign one day, and he told him to reign in peace and not to have recourse to violence. "I was obliged to daunt Europe by arms; in the present day, the way is to convince by reason. (*J'ai été obligé de dompter l'Europe par les armes. Anjour d'hui il faut la convaincre*)." But the son was not destined to reign. He died in Vienna in his youth, eleven years after his father.

But all these thoughts came to him during his exile when he was much chastened, and perhaps also he wrote to influence posterity in his favour. In the days of his greatness he was too much of a man of action to be a philosopher. He worshipped only at the altar of power; his real and only love was power, and he loved it not crudely but as an artist. "I love power," he said, "yes, I love it, but after the manner of an artist: as a fiddler loves his fiddle in order to conjure from it tone and chords and harmonies." But the quest for over-much power is a dangerous one and sooner or later downfall and ruin come to the individuals or nations who seek it. So Napoleon fell, and it was as well that he fell. "Taking it all in all," he said at St. Helena, "what a ballad my life has been!"

Meanwhile the Bourbons reigned in France. But it has been said that the Bourbons never learned anything and never forgot anything. Within nine years after Napoleon's death, France had had enough of them and overthrew them. Another monarchy was established and, as a gesture of good will to the memory of Napoleon, his statue, which had been removed from the top of the Vendome column, was placed on it again. And the unhappy mother of Napoleon, blind through age, said that "once again the Emperor is in Paris!"

CONTENTS—VOL. II